

# New England Jewish History Collaborative

## Resource Guide



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## Introduction

**The New England Jewish History Collaborative** is a consortium of Jewish history and genealogy organizations from all six New England states, whose goal is to raise awareness of the history of Jewish New England and the resources available to study it. The Collaborative formed in 2019 out of the recognition that the Jewish experience in New England, and how it contributes to the larger American Jewish story, has heretofore been little studied and understood.

The Collaborative's purpose is threefold:

- 1) to identify the unique history and characteristics of the New England Jewish experience;
- 2) to attract scholars and the public to discover and use the rich resources available about New England Jewish history; and
- 3) to discuss collaborative initiatives within the New England Jewish history community.

In its first collective effort, the New England Jewish History Collaborative created both this Resource Guide and [a website](#) to help people learn more about the history of Jewish New England and the resources available to study it. It introduced these resources, and kicked off the public phase of its work, in an online event about New England Jewish history in January 2021. Going forward, the Collaborative plans to work together to stimulate partnerships and projects about Jewish history, promote new research and scholarship, and co-sponsor events and conferences.

The founding member organizations of the New England Jewish History Collaborative are:

[Documenting Maine Jewry](#);

[Jewish Cemetery Association of North America](#) (headquartered in Maine);

[Jewish Federation of New Hampshire](#);

[Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston](#);

[Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford](#);

[Jewish Historical Society of Western Massachusetts](#);

[Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association](#);

Vermont Jewry/[The Lost Mural](#); and

[The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at New England Historic Genealogical Society](#).

The Collaborative will continue to add and update information in this Resource Guide on an ongoing basis and welcomes submissions, suggestions, and comments. Contact [nejhc@nehgs.org](mailto:nejhc@nehgs.org).

*Logo for the New England Jewish History Collaborative designed by Kate-Lynne LaRoche.*

## Connecticut

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*As submitted by Elizabeth Rose, Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford*

### Historical Information about State

#### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

First recorded Jewish resident: 1659, “David the Jew” arrested for peddling in Hartford. By the late 1700s there were enough Jews for Hartford to have a “Jew Street,” but no known organized community, as Jews were not allowed to worship publicly.

Synagogues: No Jewish congregations were permitted by Connecticut law to incorporate for public worship prior to 1843, though they may have met privately. In 1843, groups from Hartford and New Haven successfully petitioned to have the laws changed to allow them the same religious rights as Christians. The first Jewish congregations on record are the Beth Israel of Hartford (organized in 1847 but may have held services as early as 1839) and Mishkan Israel of New Haven (organized in 1843 but may have assembled for worship as early as December 1840).

#### Major immigrant-era settlements and industries

Hartford: By the 1840s the first permanent group of approximately 200 Jewish settlers, mostly immigrants from Germany and Austria, established a community in Hartford and organized the Beth Israel congregation.

New Haven: A slow influx of Jewish settlers began about 1840. Families from Bavaria, their friends and kinsmen soon constituted a minyan which became Congregation Mishkan Israel. They acquired a burial ground in 1843. The first Jewish refugees arrived from Russia in February 1882 and were followed by a steady influx of Russian-Jewish families.

Bridgeport: A handful of Central and West European Jews, part of what is known as the German migration, settled in the city in the mid-19th century. They founded Congregation B’nai Israel in 1859. A much larger migration of Jews from Eastern Europe began in 1881. In addition to the predominance of Russian and Polish Jews, a large number came from Hungary and gave Bridgeport proportionately one of the most sizeable Hungarian Jewish populations in America.

Waterbury: Waterbury had a significant Jewish population beginning in the late 1800s, initially as a result of German immigration. The first synagogue in Waterbury opened in 1872. In the early 20th century, almost 9,000 Jews immigrated from Eastern Europe, with many fleeing persecution. The Orthodox Jewish community has experienced a renaissance since 2000 due to efforts by educators and developers to create an affordable alternative to the high cost of living in established Orthodox communities in New York and New Jersey.

#### Economics

Retail: Many of Hartford’s Jews worked first as peddlers and went on to open retail establishments, as was true of Jewish immigrants in Stamford, Bridgeport, and New Haven as well. Records show the presence of Jewish tobacco growers, tailors, milliners, jewelers, and



proprietors of clothing stores and shops specializing in “fancy goods.” In Stamford, the Lotstein family became one of the largest food wholesalers in Connecticut.

**Manufacturing:** In New Haven, the Strouse-Adler corset factory employed more than a thousand workers. Lewis Osterweis manufactured cigars, and Bernard Shoninger manufactured organs and pianos. Eastern European immigrants worked as peddlers, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and carpenters, and in textile shops.

**Farming:** In eastern Connecticut, farming (especially poultry farming) became an occupation for families who received support from the Baron de Hirsch fund to establish farming communities, and some branched out by running hotels and resorts for Jewish families from the New York area.

## **Current Information**

The current Jewish population of Connecticut is estimated between 105,800 and 130,000.<sup>1</sup>

### **Major current Jewish population centers**

- Bridgeport area
- Greater Hartford area (especially West Hartford, Bloomfield, Farmington Valley)
- New Haven area (including shoreline towns)
- Stamford area
- Other Fairfield County (Westport, Greenwich, Fairfield)
- Middletown

### **Principal statewide Jewish organizations**

#### [Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut](#)

### **Principal regional Jewish organizations**

- [Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County:](#)
- [Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut](#)
- [Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford](#)
- [Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven](#)
- [Jewish Federation of Western Connecticut](#)
- [UJA Federation of Greenwich](#)
- [United Jewish Federation \(Greater Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien\)](#)

### **Schools and universities**

- University of Connecticut – Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life
- University of Hartford – Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies
- Yale University – Judaic Studies Program
- Bais Yaakov of Waterbury

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<sup>1</sup> “American Jewish Population Project.” Steinhart Social Research Institute, Brandeis University. Accessed January 5, 2021. <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/map>. “About JFACT.” Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut. Accessed January 4, 2021. <https://jfact.org/about-jfact/>.

- Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy – Stamford
- Carmel Academy – Greenwich
- Ezra Academy (Solomon Schechter) – Woodbridge
- New England Jewish Academy – West Hartford
- Solomon Schechter Academy – New London
- Solomon Schechter Day School – West Hartford
- Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy - Orange

### **Jewish cemeteries and burial information**

- [Association of Jewish Cemeteries \(Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford\)](#)
- [New Haven Jewish Cemetery Database](#)
- *Jewish Cemeteries of Hartford, Connecticut: The Cohen/Goldfarb Collection*, 2 volumes. (Heritage Books, 1995)

### **Historical Resources**

#### **Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers**

##### [Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County](#)

The Archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County house thousands of documents, articles, photos, more than 250 oral histories, and artifacts collected from individuals, organizations and through the society's own research. The society's holdings include family histories, family papers and family trees. In addition, there is access to many Jewish organizational records, materials and publications for the geographical area from (east to west) Greenwich to Westport and (north) to Newtown. Volunteers currently maintain the archive repository and are pleased to assist with research.

##### [Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford](#)

JHSGH's archives include organizational and synagogue records, photographs, family papers, a small number of artifacts, and an extensive collection of over a thousand oral histories relating to Jewish life in the Greater Hartford region. Many finding aids are available on the website, as is a link to some digitized oral histories.

##### [Jewish Historical Society of New Haven](#)

Located in the Ethnic Heritage Center at Southern Connecticut State University, the collection contains synagogue, cemetery, and organizational records, photographs, original documents, genealogies, diaries, newspaper articles scrapbooks, and an object collection of artifacts. There is an extensive library of 1500 volumes. The society has over 400 audio/video tapes which preserve the society's programs, meetings, events and interviews and more than 300 oral histories about Jewish New Haven.

Information about rural Jewish communities in eastern Connecticut can be found in the digital archives of the [New England Hebrew Farmers](#) in Chesterfield, the earliest rural congregation in the state, at and on the [website](#) of the Temple Beth Israel Preservation Society (a Jewish heritage museum for northeastern Connecticut).

### [Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University](#)

The Fortunoff Archive's collection consists of over 4,400 testimonies of Holocaust survivors, witnesses and liberators. The testimonies are comprised of over 12,000 recorded hours of videotape and were produced in cooperation with thirty-six affiliated projects across North America, South America, Europe, and Israel. The Fortunoff Archive and its affiliates recorded the testimonies of willing individuals with first-hand experience of the Nazi persecutions, including those who were in hiding, survivors, bystanders, resisters, and liberators. Testimonies were recorded in whatever language the witness preferred, and range in length from 30 minutes to over 40 hours (recorded over several sessions).

### [Yale University Judaica Collection](#)

One of the major collections of Judaica in the country, the focus of the approximately 300,000-volume collection, which includes manuscripts and rare books, is biblical, classical, medieval, and modern periods of Jewish literature and history. The collection ranges from antiquity to the present, and includes books and manuscripts from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, the United States, and elsewhere.

### **Statewide repositories and resources**

[Connecticut Archives Online](#) allows users to search across archival finding aids held by different repositories in the state.

[Connecticut Digital Archive](#) allows users to search for digital resources held by different libraries and museums in the state.

### [Connecticut Historical Society](#)

Established in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society is the state's official historical society and one of the oldest in the nation. The CHS's collection includes more than 4 million manuscripts, graphics, books, artifacts, and other historical materials. Materials of interest for Jewish history include the Fox/Auerbach/Koopman/Schiro family and business records (G. Fox Department Store), the Haas family and business records (L.B. Haas Co.); a Dutch/Hebrew prayerbook printed in Amsterdam in 1862; and a set of wicker trunks used by a Jewish refugee family after WWII.

### [University of Connecticut Archives and Special Collections](#)

Collections of interest for Jewish history researchers include: The International Military Tribunal records compiled by Thomas J. Dodd, who served as the Executive Trial Council for the Nuremberg Trials after World War II. The records were used as evidence by Dodd and the judges in the prosecution of Nazi criminals; the "The Peoples of Connecticut Project" oral history project; records of the UConn Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life; publications related to Jews worldwide in the Laurie S. Wiseberg and Harry Scoble Human Rights Internet Collection; Holocaust related items collected by Irena Urdang de Tour, who came from Poland to Connecticut after the war; and papers or associated materials of various Jewish writers, including Abbie Hoffman, Norman H. Finkelstein, and Maurice Sendak, among others.

## Local Jewish genealogical societies

### [Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut](#)

## Publications

Ascher, Carol. *A Chance for Land and Fresh Air: Russian Jewish Immigrants in Sharon and Amenia*. Sharon, Connecticut: Sharon Historical Society, 2017.

Baulsir, Linda, and Irwin Miller. *The Jewish Communities of Greater Stamford*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2002.

Dalin, David, and Jonathan Rosenbaum. *Making a Life, Building a Community: A History of the Jews of Hartford*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997.

*Connecticut Jewish History*, published by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford:

- Vol. 1: *Jews in Connecticut Politics*
- Vol. 2: John Sutherland and Marsha Lotstein, eds., *1843-1943: One Hundred Years of Jewish Congregations in Connecticut: An Architectural Survey* (1991)
- Vol. 3: *Witness to War 1941-45 – The Soviet Jewish Experience* (2001)
- Vol. 4: Mary Donohue and Briann Greenfield, *A Life of the Land: Connecticut's Jewish Farmers* (2010)
- Vol. 5 Holly Hutton, *A Brief Look Back: A Historical Overview of the Jewish Legal Community of Hartford, Connecticut* (2014)

Hoffman, Betty, ed. *A History of Jewish Connecticut: Mensches, Migrants and Mitzvahs*. Charleston, South Carolina: History Press, 2010.

Hoffman, Betty. *Jewish Hearts: A Study of Dynamic Ethnicity in the United States and the Soviet Union*. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2001.

Hoffman, Betty. *Jewish West Hartford: From City to Suburb*. Charleston, South Carolina: History Press, 2017.

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford. *Jewish Community of Hartford*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2016.

Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven, *Jews in New Haven* – 10 volumes.

Koenig, Samuel. *An American Jewish Community: The Story of the Jews in Stamford, Connecticut*. Federal Writers Project, 1940; reprinted by the Stamford Jewish Historical Society, 1991.

Silverman, Morris. *Hartford Jews, 1659-1970*. Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1970.

Walden, Joan, ed. *Remembering the Old Neighborhood: Stories from Hartford's North End West Hartford, Connecticut*: Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, 2009.

Walden, Joan, and Susan Juster Viner, eds. *Revisiting Our Neighborhoods: Stories from Hartford's Past*. West Hartford, Connecticut: Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, 2013.

Articles on Jewish history in *Connecticut Explored: The Magazine of Connecticut History*

Mary Donohue, "Gaining Religious Equality," *Connecticut Explored* (Spring 2016).

Mary Donohue, "Sophie Tucker, Last of the Red-Hot Mamas," *Connecticut Explored* 4:4 (Fall 2006), <https://www.ctexplored.org/sophie-tucker-last-of-the-red-hot-mamas/>.

Mary Donohue, "The Connecticut Catskills: Jewish Resorts and Vacationers," *Connecticut Explored* (Summer 2018), <https://www.ctexplored.org/the-connecticut-catskills/>.

Mary Donohue and Kenneth Libo, "Hebrew Tillers of the Soil," *Connecticut Explored* 4:2 (Spring 2006), <https://www.ctexplored.org/hebrew-tillers-of-the-soil/>.

Nancy Finlay, "Elbert Weinberg's Enduring Monuments," *Connecticut Explored* 17:1 (Winter 2018), <https://www.ctexplored.org/elbert-weinbergs-enduring-monuments/>.

Robert Gregson, "Josef and Anni Albers in Connecticut," *Connecticut Explored* 17:1 (Winter 2018), <https://www.ctexplored.org/josef-anni-albers-in-connecticut/>.

Betty Hoffman, "The Handkerchief Brigade," *Connecticut Explored* (Fall 2016), <https://www.ctexplored.org/the-handkerchief-brigade/>.

Marsha Lotstein, "Jews in Hartford: Making Their Presence Known," *Connecticut Explored* 3:3 (Summer 2005), <https://www.ctexplored.org/jews-in-hartford-making-their-presence-known/>.

Ethan Manis, "Abraham Ribicoff Turns Connecticut Blue," *Connecticut Explored* (Spring 2016), <https://www.ctexplored.org/the-handkerchief-brigade/>.

*Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*

"Connecticut's Jewish Farmers," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, May 3, 2020. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/94-connecticuts-jewish-farmers>.

"Department Stores, G. Fox, and the Black Freedom Movement," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, June 17, 2019. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/size/5/?search=department+stores>

"Fair Housing, Unfair Housing Practices Affecting Jews and African-Americans," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, January 21, 2018. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/43-the-challenge-of-fair-housing-in-cts-suburbs>

"Bagel Beach and Jewish Vacationers," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, August 16, 2017. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/35-bagel-beach-and-jewish-vacationers-at-the-ct-shore-0>

"Post-WWII: 1949 Travel Diary of Beatrice Fox Auerbach with Congresswoman Chase Woodhouse," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, July 1, 2019. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/74-post-wwii-1949-travel-diary-of-beatrice-auerbach-with-congresswoman-chase-woodhouse>

Sophie Tucker: Hartford's Red Hot Mama," *Grating the Nutmeg: The Podcast of Connecticut History*, podcast audio, August 30, 2020. <https://gratingthenutmeg.libsyn.com/101-sophie-tucker-hartfords-red-hot-mama>

## Famous Jewish people from Connecticut

### Artists

- Anni Albers (1899–1994) was a textile designer, weaver, writer, and printmaker who inspired a reconsideration of fabrics as an art form, both in their functional roles and as wall hangings. As part of the Bauhaus school of modernism, she became a bold abstract artist. She used straight lines and solid colors to make works on paper and wall hangings devoid of representation.
- Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) came to fame in the late 1960s with his wall drawings and "structures" (a term he preferred instead of "sculptures") but was prolific in a wide range of media including drawing, printmaking, photography, painting, installation, and artist's books. He has been the subject of hundreds of solo exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world since 1965.
- Elbert Weinstein (1928-1991) gained worldwide recognition for his creative interpretations of religion, mythology and the Holocaust. His works are on display in museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, and in public spaces where they were commissioned.

### Business and Finance

- Beatrice Fox Auerbach (1887-1968) took over her family's venerable G. Fox department store in Hartford, which became the largest family-owned retail operation in the nation. She was known for her progressive employee policies, her dedication to civil rights, and her advocacy for women's leadership.
- Murray Lender (1930-2012) helped expand his family's bagel bakery in New Haven into a national brand.

### Education and Research

- Annie Fisher (1883-1968) Hartford's first female principal, she was also its first female district superintendent and was a pioneer in education and teacher salary reforms.

### Entertainment

- Sophie Tucker (1884-1966) was one of the 20th century's most successful and highest paid performers. A singer and humorist, she moved successfully through vaudeville, recordings, Broadway, radio, movies, nightclubs and finally television.

### Public Affairs / Politics

- Joseph Lieberman (1942-) was the first and only Orthodox Jew elected to the United States Senate. First elected in 1988, in 1994 he made Connecticut history by winning 67% of the vote, the largest ever in a Connecticut Senate race. He is perhaps best known

as the Democratic candidate for vice president in 2000 and as the first Jew nominated for the position on a major party ticket.

- Abraham Ribicoff (1910-1998) represented Connecticut in the House of Representatives (1945–52), was a member of the U.S. Senate (1962–1981) and became the first Jewish governor of Connecticut (1955–61).

### **Sports**

- Louis “Kid” Kaplan (1901-1970) was a Russian born boxer who settled in Hartford and became the world featherweight champion in 1925-26.

# Maine

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*As submitted by Harris Gleckman, Documenting Maine Jewry*

## Historical Information about State

### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

First recorded Jewish resident: Susman Abrams in 1785.

Earliest Jewish community: A German Jewish community in Bangor in the 1849; it established Congregation Ahawas Achim and its own cemetery (now known as the Webster Ave cemetery). The community collapsed with the downturn in the lumber industry in 1856.

### Major immigrant-era settlements and industries

Settlements: Bangor, Portland, Rockland, Lewiston, Biddeford, Calais, and Aroostook County.

Industries: Peddling, main street stores, retail and wholesale supplies to the local industries (forests in particular) industries, junk, leather, and chickens/eggs.

## Current Information

The current Jewish population of Maine is 22,600.<sup>2</sup>

### Major current Jewish population centers

- [Greater Augusta](#)
- [Greater Bangor](#)
- [Bath](#)
- [Biddeford-Saco](#)
- [Lewiston-Auburn](#)
- [Old Orchard Beach](#)
- [Greater Portland](#)
- [Greater Rockland](#)
- [Greater Waterville](#)

### Principal statewide Jewish organizations

- [Center for Small Town Jewish Life](#)
- [Documenting Maine Jewry](#)
- [Maine Holocaust and Human Rights Center](#)
- [Maine Jewish Film Festival](#)
- [Maine Jewish Museum](#)
- The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), [Southern Maine Section](#)
- [Jewish Community Alliance](#) (Cumberland and York Counties)

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<sup>2</sup> Brandeis University Steinhardt Social Research Institute estimate



## Schools and universities

- Pre-K to middle school: Levey Day School, Portland
- College level: Colby College, Jewish Studies Program; University of Maine, Jewish studies minor
- Adult education: most congregations and the Jewish Community Alliance, Portland; Center for Small Town Jewish Life.

## Jewish cemeteries and burial information

- [Sixteen Jewish cemeteries](#)
- [Burial records](#)

## Other information resources

- [85 Jewish summer camps](#)

## Historical Resources

### Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers

#### [Bangor Public Library](#)

The Bangor Public Library has the largest physical Jewish collection in Maine. The collection includes books, genealogies, letters and postcards, newspaper articles, property deeds, and photos. Newspaper article clippings of Maine Jewish life are plentiful in the collection. Among the unique items are a 1974 art festival poster, the minutes from a Mu Sigma Fraternity chapter meeting, and a collection of B'nai B'rith membership records for hundreds of individuals and chapter lists for various years in the 1950s. There are also records on donations for the International B'nai B'rith Charity Chest.

The collection has numerous invoices from or for various Jewish affiliated businesses. For example, there is a 1957 invoice from Archie Bishop & Sons for fuel oil and furnace cleaning services in Presque Isle.

The collection also contains various articles of "The Community News," a publication by the Jewish Community Council, from the 1950, 1960s and 1980s; records on Jewish families and individuals living in Maine, including a 1955 list of Jews in Aroostook and New Brunswick from the Aroostook Hebrew Community Center; and a summary census table of Bangor residents recording number of years as a residence, and a photo collection of the large Cohen and Minsky families.

#### Colby College – [Maine Jewish History Project](#)

The Maine Jewish History Project is a collaboration between Colby's Jewish Studies Program and the Special Collections at Colby College. The site has research reports by Colby students and other historians and mainly focuses on Jewish life at the college and throughout the Kennebec Valley. The project's website is organized by Maine, Kennebec Valley and Colby College. The Maine section is organized by Individuals and Communities, further sectioned by town, Religious, Cultural, and Social Life and Jewish-Gentile Relations. The Kennebec Valley page is organized by Jewish Population, Occupational Activity, Religious, Cultural, and Social

Activities, Jewish Women, and Integration into Waterville Society. The section Jews at Colby does not have subsections. The website also contains the papers from the 2011 conference “Discovering Maine’s Jewish History: The Second Maine Jewish History Conference”.

The project’s website has a joint exhibition with Maine Memory Network on “Lobster and Latkes: Jewish Life in Maine.” The exhibit is sectioned into Occupational Activities; Religious Life; Communal Life; Life Cycle; Maine’s Jews in America’s Wars; Leisure and Recreation; Jews in Maine’s Colleges; Changing Landscape of Jewish Organizations; Jewish Contributions to Maine’s Cultural Landscape; Preserving Jewish Traditions and Culture; Contributing, Advancing, Succeeding: Jews and Occupations; and Experiences of Jewish Teenagers in Maine.

The website has four videos: “Congregation Beth Israel, 120 Years” (Bangor), by Sarah Wiseman (2009); “A Jewish Community, for the 25th Anniversary of Lewiston-Auburn’s Temple Shalom Synagogue Center” by Phyllis Graber Jensen (2007); “Shaarey Tphiloh Torah dedication ceremony,” 1955 (Portland) prepared by Maine Historical Society; and “Legacy: The Levine Family [of Waterville]” (2011). The morning and afternoon plenary and panel sessions are listed with links to recordings, keynotes, and essays. Finally, the website has a page of additional print resources with links to online publications when available.

### [Colby College Library](#)

A search of the Colby College Library collection on “Maine Jews” lists 239 items, the majority of which (184) are newspaper articles; 18 are books and ebooks; and 16 are articles.

The library has the original Colby student interviews with Maine Jews. The library also has a collection of artifacts, such as a photo of a Civil War sack coat, and a Hadassah record book from 1928.

### [Documenting Maine Jewry](#) (DMJ)

The Documenting Maine Jewry website (Dec 2020) provides an integrated listing of primary and secondary documents on Maine Jewish history that are housed in-state, on-line, and in its own collection.

DMJ’s own collection includes brief biographic notes on over 39,000 people with strong connections to Maine Jewry; over 2,900 local, state, and regional organizations important to Maine’s Jewish life; 3,400 photographs; 1,509 newspaper articles or citations; 205 obituaries, 127 letters; 431 community newsletters; 400 membership records; and 400 other Jewish community records.

The material is indexed by Jewish community (8 current and 8 former communities), by individual, by organization, by year, and by theme. The website also serves the state-wide index to Jewish burials in the 18 current or former cemeteries. Most of these entries have an associated headstone image. Separately DMJ provides a state-wide listing of the names on memorial boards from all current and former congregations.

Over the years, Maine has had a rather remarkable collection on cantors. There are recordings of the davening of many of these cantors. There are separate listings of Maine’s clergy over the years, Jewish summer camps, Jews in the professions, Jewish affiliated businesses, Jews active in different industrial sectors, and Jewish census estimates 1850-2019.

### [Judaica Collection](#), University of Southern Maine

The Judaica Collection at the University of Southern Maine has a large collection of items relevant to the Portland area. The collection contains a hand-edited and final draft of “A Brief History of United Hebrew Charities, Portland, ME 1900 to 1950,” “Macabee Club Membership Lists and photographs from annual dance program” from 1958 to 1968, and 21 volumes of the “Joseph and Marjorie Chandler Book Collection from 1886 to 1981.” The collection also contains Vaad Hoir Passover letters, Temple Beth El membership lists and dedication programs, a Etz Chaim Synagogue membership list, and records of various Jewish organizations in Portland ranging from 1894 until 1977. Organizations listed are Temple Israel, Temple Beth El, Etz Chaim Synagogue, Young Women's Hebrew Association, Ladies Auxiliary for the Jewish Home for the Aged, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, United Hebrew Charities, and Jewish Bicentennial Oral History Program.

### [Maine Holocaust and Human Rights Center](#)

The Maine Holocaust and Human Rights Center has a collection of 80 oral histories done by the Center of all the known Holocaust survivors in Maine as well as memoirs by Maine Holocaust survivors Judith Magyar Isaacson and Gerda Haas and a private biography of survivor Edith Lucas Pagelson. In addition, the collection contains interviews with Holocaust eyewitnesses, liberators, and survivors. Transcripts and audio and visual interview links are found at the DMJ website.

### [Portland Public Library](#)

The Portland Public Library has an online collection of 80 oral histories from the Greater Portland Area. The library also has “The 2007 Jewish Community Study of Southern Maine” by Ira Sheskin, “Maine’s Jewish Heritage” by Abraham and Jean Peck, “Jerusalem of the North” by Michael Cohen, “Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities” by Judith Goldstein, and “Yankee Fiddler: A Man Called Suss” by Julius Sussman.

### [Maine Historical Society](#) (MHS)

The Maine Historical Society has photo collection of the Anshe Sfard synagogue and selected artifacts, such as a carved eagle and carved feet from the bimah of the former synagogue. MHS also contains bibliographic and genealogic collections, such as a collection of paper from Benjamin Band, the David family, Justice Pinansky and Philip Morris Schwind.

MHS also has documents from individual congregations, such as a Bet Ha’am congregational profile, a history on the Beth Israel Congregation in Waterville, and a directory of churches and religious organizations in Maine from 1940. The society has articles from and about the Jewish Community Center, the Lafayette Hotel, and the Maimonides Club. There is a 1940 publication on “The Growth of Portland's Jewish Community Life: A Complete History from the Very Beginning of the City's Jewish Life to Its Present-Day Prominence” by Dr. Elias Caplan. Lastly, the collection contains many photos of Jewish life in Maine.

### **Publications**

Ben Band, *Portland Jewry: Its Growth and Development*, 1955, Jewish Historical Society

Judith Goldsmith, *Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities*, 1992, Morrow

Abe Peck and Jean Marcus Peck, *Maine's Jewish Heritage*

Celia C Risen, *Some Jewels of Maine*, 1997, Dorrance Pub

## **Famous Jewish people from Maine**

### **Artists**

- Louise Berliawsky Nevelson (Rockland)
- Dahlov Zorach Ipcar (Georgetown)

### **Business and Finance**

- Barney Osher (Biddeford), founding director of World Savings Bank, philanthropist.
- Marion Sandler (Biddeford), co-CEO of Golden West Financial Corporation and World Savings Bank
- Ingram Berg 'Burt' Shavitz (Parkman/Dexter), co-founder of Burt's Bees

### **Education and Research**

- Arthur B Wein (Waterville) linguist, Harvard University
- Peter Lunder (Waterville), Vice-Chair of the national board of the Smithsonian Institution and the Dana-Farber Cancer Center
- Philip Lown (Auburn), founded Lown School of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and the Graduate Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies, Brandeis

### **Entertainment**

- Hiram Abrams (Portland), co-founder of Paramount Pictures and founder of United Artist Corp Adam Barr (Portland) Emmy TV writer and producer, including Will & Grace
- Linda Lavin (Portland), multiple Emmy award winner

### **Health Care and Medicine**

- Leah Binder (Portland), named one of top 25 women in healthcare by Modern Healthcare.
- Dr Bernard Lown (Auburn), inventor of the direct current defibrillator, co-recipient of the 1985 Nobel Prize, and co-founder of International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War

### **Journalism**

- David Brown (Bath), an important Reuter's war correspondent during WWII. He was one of the newspapermen present at the press conference in Casablanca between President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and at the Japanese surrender to Douglas MacArthur aboard the USS Missouri.
- Shirley Povich (Bar Harbor/Bath), an American sports columnist and reporter for The Washington Post and elected to the National Sportswriters Hall of Fame.

- Elaine S Povich (Bath), an award-winning Washington correspondent, reporter, writer and journalism professor and author of *John McCain: A Biography* and *Nancy Pelosi: A Biography*.

## Law

- Morton Brody (Lewiston), Judge US District Court for the District of Maine.
- David Cohen (Portland), US Magistrate Judge; Robert Hirshon (Portland), President of the American Bar Association.
- Louis Kornreich (Bangor), US Federal Bankruptcy Judge.
- Kermit Lipez (Augusta/Portland), Judge, US Court of Appeals for the First District.
- George Z Singal (Bangor) Chief, US District Court for the District of Maine.
- Military Service
- Maurice (Mashe) Rubinoff (Portland), at the conclusion of WWII searched protected Jewish areas in Germany and re-united families in DP camps.
- Louis H Weinstein (Portland) served as the liaison officer from General Eisenhower to General de Gaulle and entered Paris on Liberation Day with de Gaulle.

## Music

- Cantor Kurt Messerschmidt (Portland) – pre-Shoah, director Berlin choir, post-Shoah, director Munich Radio Choir and cantor for the first memorial service at Dachau concentration camp.
- Batya (Bonnie) Ben David (Portland) – soprano with the Metropolitan Opera, New York.
- Cantor Paul Zim (Portland, born Zimmelman), producer of Judaica-based children's and ceremonial music.

## Public Affairs / Politics

- Albert Abrahamson (Portland/Brunswick), Assistant Director of the War Refugee Board, created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the only official government organization with a responsibility to rescue Jews from Nazi Europe; Harlan Baker (Portland), founding member of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, which later became the Democratic Socialist of America.
- William Cohen (Bangor) – US Senator & Secretary of Defense.
- Oscar Cox (Portland) helped write Lend-Lease Act (1941) & served as Corporation Counsel for New York City.

## Sports

- Joel Bloom (Camp Powhatan) received first PhD in camp management, Columbia University.
- Johnny Dutch Levine (Waterville), 1905 Yale Football team.
- Abe Nathanson (Portland), Boxing 1920s-1930s.

## Massachusetts

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*As submitted by Carol Clingan, Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston*

### Historical Information about State

#### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

First recorded Jewish resident: Judah Monis (1683-1764) was a scholar and Hebraicist; he converted to Christianity before joining Harvard College. Moses Michael Hays (1739-1805) was a merchant and one of founders of Massachusetts Bank; he is related to the Touros of Rhode Island.

#### Major immigrant-era settlements with earliest known synagogue

Boston was the last major Atlantic port to have a significant Jewish population; prior to the 1850s, most Jewish immigrants in the city did not stay very long as the city was inhospitable to newcomers and did not have as many opportunities as New York. By 1899, the Jewish population of Boston was 20,000.<sup>3</sup>

1840-60: German immigration period; Boston—Beth Israel (1849), Temple Israel (1854), Mishkan Israel (1858).

1880-1920: Eastern Europeans arrived in large numbers

- Boston: South End (1842); West End (1888); North End (1875); Dorchester (1895); Mattapan (1921); Roxbury (1878); East Boston (1891)
- Nearby communities around Boston: Chelsea (1887); Everett (1896); Revere (1890); Lynn (1889); Winthrop (1912); Malden (1901); Medford (1917); Newton (1895); Cambridge (1903); Somerville (1898); Waltham (1914); Watertown (1918)
- North of Boston: Holyoke (1893); North Shore: Beverly (1897); Salem (1894); Newburyport (1895); Peabody (1909); Lowell (1888); Lawrence (1889); Medway (1898); Wakefield (1915); Woburn (1906); Gloucester (1904)
- South of Boston: New Bedford (1892); Norwood (1907); Fall River (1885); Brockton (1899); Taunton (1910); Maynard (1909); Milford (1903)
- Western Massachusetts: North Adams (1893); Northampton (1893); Pittsfield (1869—oldest congregation between Boston and Albany); Worcester (1877); Springfield (1886); Webster (1910); Wilmington (1917); Westfield (1911); Worcester (1877)

1910-1940: Jewish community moves from downtown Boston to Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, and other nearby communities.

Post-War: Jews move from Boston neighborhoods to suburbs (Brookline, Newton, Swampscott, Marblehead, Framingham, Quincy and others).

1990s on: Further movement to outer suburbs off Route 495 (Sudbury, Wayland, Southborough.)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

## Major immigrant-era industries

- Peddling followed by main street retail stores (general, grocery, clothing, pharmacy, etc) and then department stores
- Cigar-making
- Farming
- Crafts (cobbler, tailor, furrier, watchmaker, optician, bricklayer)

## Current Information

### Number of Jews

- 293,080 (2019)<sup>4</sup>

### Major current Jewish population centers

- Greater Boston (includes Boston, immediate suburbs within areas below)
  - MetroWest (Brookline, Newton, Wellesley, Needham, Natick, Framingham, Sudbury, Wayland, Weston)
- Worcester
- Western Massachusetts: Springfield/Longmeadow, Pittsfield
- North (Lynn, Marblehead, Swampscott, Beverly, Newburyport, Peabody, Salem, Gloucester, Lexington, Burlington)
- South (Milton, Quincy, Canton, Sharon, Hingham, Plymouth, Cape Cod)
- Merrimack Valley (Andover, Lawrence, Lowell, Haverhill)

### Principal statewide Jewish organizations

- [Combined Jewish Philanthropies](#)
- Federations ([Berkshires](#), [Western Massachusetts](#), [Central Massachusetts](#), [Merrimack Valley](#), [Cape Cod](#), [Greater New Bedford](#))

### Principal regional Jewish organizations

- [Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts](#)
- [Synagogue Council of Massachusetts](#)
- [Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston](#)

## Cultural Centers

[Vilna Shul](#), Boston. Currently a cultural and historic site, this is the oldest remaining immigrant-era synagogue in Boston and hosts a wide variety of programs, tours and services.

## Schools and universities

*Massachusetts has a variety of Jewish studies degree programs and schools. This list is not exhaustive.*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

- [Brandeis University](#)
- [Harvard University—Center for Jewish Studies](#)
- [Hebrew College](#)
- [American Society for Technion-Israel Institute of Technology](#)
- [Boston University—Eli Weisel Center for Jewish Studies](#)
- [University of Massachusetts—Judaic and Near Eastern Studies program](#)
- [Northeastern University](#)
- [The Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst](#)
- [Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Salem State University](#)
- [Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University](#)
- [Smith College](#)
- [Tufts University Judaic Studies Program](#)
- [Wellesley College Jewish Studies Program](#)
- [Gann Academy](#)
- [Kollel of Greater Boston](#)
- [Maimonides School](#)
- [New England Hebrew Academy](#)
- [The Rashi School](#)
- [Solomon Schechter Day School](#)

## Historical Resources

### Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers

[Wyner Jewish Family Heritage Center](#) at New England Historic Genealogical Society

Incorporating the New England Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center has more than 2 million records in its archives and more than 600,000 searchable documents in its growing digital collections. It is a destination for exploring and preserving the history of Jewish families and institutions in New England and beyond. Through its extensive archival collections, scholarship, educational programs, exhibits and public events, the JHC engages scholars and the general public in the study of Jewish history and culture.

[Jewish Historical Society of Western Massachusetts](#)

This organization collects documents, stories, and photos in the region for its archives and oral histories.

[Jewish Women’s Archive](#)

A national organization that documents Jewish women’s stories, elevates their voices, and inspires them to be agents of change through a robust online collection and educational programs. World’s largest collection of online information about Jewish women and their history. Boston-based material on Soviet Jewry movement.

[Yiddish Book Center](#)



An international organization working to recover, celebrate, and regenerate Yiddish and modern Jewish literature and culture through collection, study, and scholarship

### **Statewide repositories and resources**

#### [Worcester Historical Museum](#)

Significant Jewish archive containing local family and organizational papers and the photo collection of Sidney Plotkin.

#### [City of Boston Archives](#)

#### [Massachusetts Historical Society](#)

#### [Massachusetts Archives](#)

#### [Facing History and Ourselves](#)

### **Local Jewish genealogical societies**

[Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston](#); website includes many valuable resources including a historical list of [synagogues](#), [cemeteries](#), and [newspapers on microfilm](#).

### **Publications**

*Jewish Advocate* (1909-2020)—available on microfilm at Hebrew College, Boston Public Library, and the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (also as a *ProQuest* database.)

#### [North Shore Journal](#)

Antin, Mary. *The Promised Land*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912

Ehrenfried, Albert. *Chronicle of Boston Jewry*. Boston: privately published in limited edition, 1963

Siegel, Richard, Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld, eds. *The First Jewish Catalog A Do-It-Yourself Kit*. Somerville: Havurat Shalom, 1973

Sarna, Jonathan D Sarna and Ellen Smith, eds. *The Jews of Boston*. Boston, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Yale University Press, 1995

### **Famous Jewish people from Massachusetts**

#### **Public affairs/politics**

- Louis D. Brandeis—first Jewish Justice, US Supreme Court
- Michael Bloomberg—mayor, New York City
- Felix Frankfurter—third Jewish Justice, US Supreme Court
- Richard Goodwin—speechwriter for JFK

#### **Entertainment**

- Leonard Bernstein, composer and conductor
- Arlene Francis, TV personality
- Ruth Gordon, Broadway actress
- Nat Hentoff, columnist, *Village Voice*

- Leonard Nimoy, actor
- Barbara Walters, TV host/interviewer
- Mike Wallace, 60 Minutes correspondent
- B.J. Novak, actor

### **Sports**

- Robert Kraft, owner of New England Patriots and New England Revolution
- Julian Edelman, New England Patriots
- Theo Epstein, manager of Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs
- Aly Raisman, top Olympic gymnast
- Kevin Youkilis, Boston Red Sox

### **Arts**

- Jonathan Kozol, author
- Ellen Goodman, *Boston Globe* columnist; founder of Conversation Project

### **Business**

- Leopold Morse, merchant and philanthropist
- Edward and Abraham Filene, founders of Filene's department store

### **Academics/Medicine**

- Noam Chomsky, linguist
- Sidney Farber, founder of Dana Farber and Jimmy Fund
- Jonas Salk, inventor of polio vaccine

### **Religious Leadership**

- Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, renowned Orthodox leader, founder of Maimonides School

## New Hampshire

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*As submitted by Stephen Soreff, MD, Jewish Federation of New Hampshire*

### Historical Information about State

#### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

First recorded Jewish resident: In 1693, William Abrams and Aaron Moses moved from New Castle to Sanbornton. In 1770, Joseph Levy settled near what is now known as Ossipee.

1784: New Hampshire's first state Constitution limited office-holding to Protestants.

1849: The Hebrew Society of Somerworth was founded.

1874: The United State Hay Fever Association was founded in Bethlehem, New Hampshire; Jewish asthma and allergy sufferers came to the White Mountains for relief.

1877: The New Hampshire state Constitution was amended to remove religious qualifications.

#### Major immigrant-era settlements and industries

The early Jewish settlers (particularly from the influx escaping the problems of eastern Europe) came as small merchants and trades people. Few, if any, worked in Manchester's huge Amoskeag textile mills. The first peddlers became merchants, and the downtown areas of Manchester, Nashua, Dover, Portsmouth, Keene, and Claremont soon had numbers of Jewish entrepreneurs. The early settlers' children, first generation Americans, became lawyers, physicians, dentists, and teachers.

Berlin: In 1915, Beth Israel congregation was founded.

Bethlehem: In 1916, Isidor Lusher bought the Alamont Hotel and in 1920, the Bethlehem Hebrew Congregation was founded.

Concord: On September 19, 1907, 11 Jewish men met at 16 Water Street in Concord. They called themselves the "Base of Jacob". Initially they met in individual homes. In February of 1917, ten years after that day in September, Base of Jacob became Temple Beth Jacob.

Derry: In 1902, Louis and Bella Lewis became the first permanent Jewish family to settle in the town.

Keene: In 1887, a group of about ten Jewish peddlers began holding services every Saturday morning in a clothing store at the head of Central Square. In 1895 Hayman H. Cohen opened a clothing store in Peterborough, thereby becoming the first Jewish resident in the town.

Manchester: In 1862, a *minyan* had gathered in Manchester to observe the holidays, but there was no further report until 1880, when J. Wolf is listed as the first recorded permanent Jewish resident. In 1891, the Manchester community records listed 21 adult working Jewish men, nine of them heads of families. In 1892, Manchester has their first rabbi, Peter Axel, and the first Jewish wedding was conducted on March 19, 1893 (Rebecca Pines and Samuel Rosenblum).

Nashua: In 1895, 15 families originally from Boston moved to Nashua and got together in an effort to "keep a Jewish way of life alive."

Portsmouth: In the late 1880s, approximately 16 families were living in Portsmouth. In order to conduct religious services, the men would meet at various private homes. In 1910, Temple Israel was founded.

Somerworth: On July 3, 1849, the Hebrew Society of Somerworth was founded, the first in New Hampshire, and on July 12, 1856, the first Jewish cemetery was established.

## **Current Information**

In 2017, the current Jewish population of New Hampshire was estimated to be 10,120 Jews.<sup>5</sup>

### **Major current Jewish population centers**

- Concord
- Manchester
- Nashua
- Portsmouth

### **Principal statewide Jewish organizations**

[The Jewish Federation of New Hampshire](#)

### **Schools and universities**

- [Dartmouth College Hillel](#)
- [University of New Hampshire Hillel](#)
- [Chabad at Dartmouth College](#)
- UNH & Seacoast Chabad Jewish Center
- [Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College](#)

### **Jewish cemeteries and burial information**

Joshua Segal's *[The Jewish Cemeteries of New Hampshire](#)* (2010) provides a comprehensive guide to Jewish cemeteries in New Hampshire.

## **Historical Resources**

### **Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers**

[The Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#)

[Strawberry Banke Museum](#) in Portsmouth includes the [Shapiro House](#) (1919)

### **Statewide repositories and resources**

[The Millyard Museum](#), Manchester

[New Hampshire Historical Society](#)

[New Hampshire State Library](#)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/new-hampshire-jewish-history>

## Publications

David G. Stahl [Becoming American: Manchester's Jewish Community](https://www.nhhistory.org/object/712917/becoming-american-manchester-s-jewish-community-david-g-stahl), Vol. 50, No. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1995) Historical New Hampshire. <https://www.nhhistory.org/object/712917/becoming-american-manchester-s-jewish-community-david-g-stahl>

Jewish Virtual Library: [New Hampshire, United States](#)

## Famous Jewish people from New Hampshire

### Business and Finance

- Howard Brodsky – CCA Global Partners, named Business Leader of the Decade by Business New Hampshire magazine
- Revson Brothers – Founders of Revlon Cosmetics

### Education and Research

- James Freedman – President of Dartmouth College
- Kenneth Fuld – Professor of Psychology and Dean of College of Liberal Arts at University of New Hampshire
- Hans Heilbronner – Professor of History at University of New Hampshire

### Entertainment

- Adam Sandler – actor/comedian
- Ralph Baer – Pioneer inventor of video games
- Sarah Silverman – comedian

### Medicine

- Dr. Sam Katz – One of developers of measles vaccine with Dr. Enders. Chairman of Pediatrics at Duke.
- Dr. Sydney Gellis – Chief of Pediatrics at Tufts/Boston Floating Hospital Pediatrics.
- Dr. Selma Deitch – Pediatrician and Public Health Doctor – who, with benefactor May Gruber of Pandora Mills, started Child Health Services in Manchester, to serve underprivileged children.

### Public Affairs / Politics

- Philip Hollman – Superior Court justice.
- Warren Rudman – United States Senator.
- Susan Silberberg – City planner and expert on the Manchester Millyard.
- Singer Family – incredible record of service and contributions to their community.

### Sports

- Sam Fuld – Stanford graduate and major league baseball player.

## Rhode Island

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*As submitted by Kate-Lynne LaRoche, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association*

### Historical Information about State

#### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

The first Jews in Rhode Island settled in Newport in 1658. This settlement contained fifteen Jewish families from Barbados and Curacao, where their families had previously migrated from Amsterdam and London after being expelled from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition. These original settlers purchased land for a cemetery in 1677, known as Touro Cemetery, located at the corner of Kay and Touro Streets in Newport.

Jews permanently resided in Newport beginning in the 1740s. This first group of “transfers” out of New York were brothers Abraham and Naftali Hart, Jacob Judah, Moses Lopez, Moses Levy, Isaac Seixas, Isaack Pollock, and Jacob Rodriguez Rivera. These tradesmen who had business and trade connections both in the south and the Caribbean, saw the potential for trade with Newport Harbor and were instrumental in making Newport the Northern gem of the Atlantic. These settlers traveled between New York and Newport for business and kept affiliation with Congregation Sheriath Israel of New York during that time.

In the 1750s, relatives of the original settlers arrived in Newport. Most notable were three more Hart brothers, Isaac, Benjamin and Jacob, and David and Aaron Lopez. Between the 1750s and 1760s, there were about 25 Jewish families residing in Newport, and they soon needed a place of worship. Between 1763 and 1769, British architect Peter Harrison designed and built Touro Synagogue. This new house of worship and its congregation, Nephuse Israel, was constructed as a sister synagogue to Congregation Sheriath Israel in New York. Today, Touro Synagogue is the oldest standing synagogue in North America.

#### Major immigrant-era settlements and industries

- Newport
- Providence
  - South Providence “Jew Town”
  - The North End
- Woonsocket
- Pawtucket

Peddling, junk dealing, storefronts, meat markets, textiles, and jewelry were typical industries.

### Current Information

The current Jewish population of Rhode Island is 18,750.<sup>6</sup>

#### Major current Jewish population centers

- Barrington

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-in-the-united-states-by-state>

- Bristol
- Cranston
- Middletown
- Pawtucket
- Providence
- Woonsocket

### **Principal statewide Jewish organizations**

[Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island](#)

[Camp JORI](#)

[Jewish Collaborative Services](#)

[The Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center](#)

[Touro Fraternal Association](#)

### **Principal regional Jewish organizations**

[Touro Synagogue National Historic Site](#)

### **Major institutions of Jewish learning (colleges, day schools, Jewish Studies programs)**

[Brown RISD Hillel](#)

[Brown University – Judaic Studies](#)

[Bryant University](#)

[Chabad of College Hill](#)

[Johnson and Wales Hillel](#)

[Roger Williams University Hillel](#)

[URI Hillel](#)

[USY Providence](#)

[Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School](#)

[Jewish Community Day School \(JCDSRI\)](#)

[David C. Isenberg Family Early Childhood Center](#)

[Jewish Learning Institute](#)

[Project Shoresh](#)

[Providence College Jewish-Catholic Theological Exchange](#)

[Providence Community Kollel](#)

[PJ Library](#)

[New England Rabbinical College \(NERC\) Yeshiva Gedola of Providence](#)

[Providence Hebrew Day School](#)

[Congregation Agudas Achim Religious School](#)

[Temple Beth El Religious School](#)

[Temple Emanu-El Religious School](#)

[Temple Habonim Religious School](#)

[Temple Shalom Samuel Zilman Bazarsky Religious School](#)

[Temple Sinai Religious School](#)

[Temple Torat Yisrael Religious School](#)

## **Jewish cemeteries and burial information**

Lincoln Park Cemetery  
Moshassuck Cemetery  
The Touro Jewish Cemetery  
Temple Beth-El Cemetery  
Sons of Israel and David Cemetery  
Beth Olam Cemetery  
Braman Cemetery

## **Historical Resources**

### **Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers**

[Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association \(RIJHA\)](#)

### **Local Jewish genealogical societies**

The RIJHA provides genealogical research and assistance, but there is no designated organization that entirely focuses only on Jewish genealogy.

## **Publications**

Foster Geraldine. *Jews of Rhode Island, 1658-1958, Images of America Series*. Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1999.

Foster, Geraldine. *Jews in Rhode Island: A Brief History*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Publications Society, 1985.

Freund, Miriam K. *Jewish Merchants in Colonial America*. West Orange, NJ: Behrman House Publishers. 1986.

Goodwin, George and Ellen Smith, eds. *The Jews of Rhode Island*. Hanover, MA: University Press of New England in Association with Brandeis University. 2004.

Lewis, Theodore. *Sermons at Touro Synagogue, National Historic Site, Newport, Rhode Island*. Brooklyn, NY: Simcha-Graphic Associates, 1980.

*The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, 1955-2020*.

## **Famous Jewish people from Rhode Island**

### **Business and Finance**

- Bruce Sundlun – “From 1976 to 1988, Sundlun was president and chief executive officer of The Outlet Company, a department store and broadcast communications company in Providence.” After several years, he led the company into communications and was personally in charge of 3 radio stations in the US.
- Martin Chase – his store, Ann and Hope, was the first low-price, discount, department store. It was the model for Sam Walton, who visited and took the idea.
- Sol Koffler – founded American Tourister in 1933.



## Education and Research

- Sidney and Alice Goldstein - Sidney, a professor at Brown University, and his wife Alice, a researcher, did ground-breaking research on the Jewish community in Rhode Island, as well as working in China.
- Henry Loeb Jacobs – came to RI to help the RI Commercial School in 1906 and bought it in 1907. In 1916 he bought Bryant and Stratton, a local business school, and after he did, he arranged for it to be a degree-granting institution.

## Entertainment

- Jon Land – writes the Caitlin Strong series about the Texas Rangers. Has also written a series with Ben Kamal and Danielle Barnea who are a Palestinian detective and chief inspector of the Israeli police.
- Hester Kaplan – writes novels about ordinary people and their problems. She also teaches at Lesley College in Massachusetts.
- Florence Markoff – wrote about the use of language in many books and had a radio program not only about language but also about famous Jews.
- Barbara Orson – although she began her career in New York City, she was a famous actress and early producer and a cofounder at Trinity Repertory in Providence, and she also acted with the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, MA.

## Healthcare and Medicine

- Michael D Stein – A physician and author who works in the field of addiction. He has written many books about his experiences.
- Stephen Salloway – A physician and researcher in the field of dementia, he is on the faculty of Brown University and the head of the Butler Hospital Memory and Aging Program. As a researcher, he co-authored a paper that amyloid build-up, a sign of Alzheimer's, can be detected with a simple blood test up to 16 years before symptoms appear.

## Military Service

- Leonard Holland – Rhode Island State Adjutant General, 1961-1983.
- Leopold Karpeles was a Civil War Hero. He is one of the first Jews to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for military service.

## Music

- Lloyd Kaplan was a clarinet player. He played and formed many groups. Among them "The Rhode Island Stompers", "Doctors of Dixie" and his own band "Aristocrats." He is listed in the book *Who's Who in Rhode Island Jazz*.
- Ruth Saltzman played the harp and was associated with the Rhode Island Philharmonic for twenty-nine years. She also played in the Providence Opera Theatre. She gave concerts at Temple Beth El as well as weddings and Bar Mitzvahs all over the state.

## Public Affairs/Politics

- David Cicilline – Mayor of Providence, now in the US House of Representatives. He is on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman of the House Antitrust Subcommittee, and on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.
- Bruce Sundlun – second Jewish governor of RI (1991-1995; 2 terms). He was a decorated pilot in World War II. He then went on to become a lawyer (Assistant United States Attorney in Washington, D.C., and later Special Assistant to the U.S. Attorney General) and businessman.
- Richard Israel – Attorney General of Rhode Island from 1971-1975.
- Frank Licht – first Jewish governor of RI (1969-1973; 2 terms). Before that, he was an associate justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court from 1956 to 1968 and member of the Rhode Island Senate from 1949 to 1956.

## Sports

- Maurice “Young Montreal” Billinghoff boxed for two decades in the bantamweight class. His first fight was in 1916. He fought in over 200 contests and won three quarters of them.
- Milton Ernstoff was a sailboat racer. He raced in the Newport to Bermuda races. He won the race in 1964 aboard his racer Burgoo.
- Gordon Polofsky was a professional football player. From 1951 to 1953 he played offensive guard for the Chicago Cardinals.

## Religion

- Rabbi William Braude – in charge of Temple Beth El in Providence. He was a great scholar and published many books, which are still used today.

## Vermont

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*As submitted by Aaron J. Goldberg, The Lost Mural Project*

### Historical Information about state

#### Earliest Jewish settler(s)/community

- Individual Jews may have been in Vermont as early as the 1750s, particularly in the southern part of Vermont, like Poultney.
- A Jewish congregation is first recorded in Poultney, Vermont in 1867, in a minutes book (“Pinkas.”)
- German Jews may have been in Burlington, Vermont as early as the 1870s.
- Ashkenazic Jews came in large numbers from Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus in the 1880s.
- Another group of German Jews arrived in Burlington, Vermont in 1910.

#### Major immigrant-era settlements and industries

**Burlington:** The Burlington, Vermont Jewish community was formed by a number of Jewish families who came from Cekiske, Lithuania, in the 1880s (*Tsaiykishuk* in Yiddish)<sup>7</sup> and transplanted their shtetl<sup>8</sup> traditions, ceremonies and social mores to Burlington in a small geographic area called Little Jerusalem (from 1880-1940). The archivists of the community, based upon oral interviews, print articles, and sociological research<sup>9</sup> have concluded that the Burlington shtetl may have been the longest surviving Jewish shtetl-like culture in the country based upon the insularity of the Burlington Jewish community and its remote location.

**Northwest Vermont:** Many Jews came from Eastern Europe through Castle Garden in New York to find a prayer group of ten men (“minyan”) and to work as peddlers. Some Jews were working on the railroad project in this part of the state as well as the construction of Route 2 into the Champlain Islands. Beginning in the 1850s, Burlington, Vermont was the second largest freshwater lumber port in the country, attracting many immigrants. Jews coming to Burlington sought kosher food and milk, Jewish education for their children, prayer groups, and Jewish cemeteries.

#### Economics

Beginning in the 1880s, Burlington Jews had businesses involving scrap metal, junk stores, feed stores, livestock sales, groceries, shoe sales, bottling works, bakeries, milk dealers, and meat sales.

In the late 1950s and after, many Jews migrated to Vermont from other states to work for General Dynamics, General Electric, IBM and the University of Vermont Hospital & Medical School.

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<sup>7</sup> From the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, this is in Kaunas county, Kaunas district, and included surrounding villages.

<sup>8</sup> Small town/village in Eastern Europe.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, Elin L., *We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City [Burlington, VT]* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1967).

## Current Information

In 2018, the current Jewish population of Vermont was estimated at 6,000.<sup>10</sup>

In 2020, the Vermont Jewish population may be significantly more than 10,000 affiliated and unaffiliated people. According to Susan Leff of the Jewish Communities of Vermont online newsletter, there are about 1,900 affiliated families. JCVT has over 6,000 separate Vermont family addresses. Its institutional database includes 11 synagogues, 5 chavurah groups, 2 Hillel groups and 1 kibbutz-inspired cohousing project.<sup>11</sup>

### Major current population centers

- Burlington
- Bennington
- Brattleboro
- Rutland
- South Burlington
- Williston

### Schools and universities

- Middlebury College –[Hebrew Language Program](#); [Jewish Studies Program](#)
- [University of Vermont – Jewish Studies Program](#)
- [University of Vermont – Miller Center for Holocaust Studies](#)
- Saint Michael’s College – Wall Endowment Fund public lectures and symposia on Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations

## Historical Resources

### Local Jewish historical societies and resource centers

[Documenting Vermont Jewry](#)

[The Lost Mural Project](#). See website for history and press.

[Ohavi Zedek Synagogue Archives](#)

[Vermont Jewish Community Newspaper Archives](#)

**Chittenden County Jewish Cemetery Records:** Each synagogue has its own cemetery records. Many people who lived in rural communities in Vermont are buried in the Burlington and South Burlington Cemeteries: Ahavath Gerim Synagogue Cemetery and Ohavi Zedek Synagogue Hebrew Holy Society Cemetery. Portions of Ahavath Gerim Cemetery have now been purchased for use by Temple Sinai Synagogue and Chabad-Lubavitch. Ohavi Zedek Synagogue Hebrew Holy Society Cemetery comprises two cemeteries: one located on North Avenue in Burlington, Vermont and a second one located on Patchen Road in South Burlington, Vermont.

### Jewish Cemeteries:

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<sup>10</sup> Arnold Dashefsky & Ira M. Sheskin, “United States Jewish Population, 2018, jewish-population-in-the-united-states-by-state, Vermont, (5985 Total Equivalent to 1% Vermont), [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

<sup>11</sup> [www.jcvt.org](http://www.jcvt.org)

- [Jewish Cemeteries in Vermont](#) at [Find-A-Grave](#)
- [Hebrew Cemeteries in Vermont](#) at [Find-A-Grave](#)
- [Vermont Jewish Cemetery Project](#) at [International Jewish Cemetery Project](#)
- [JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry](#) at [Ancestry](#)
- [JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry](#) by [JewishGen](#)

### Statewide repositories and resources

[Cemeteries of Vermont](#) links to lists of cemeteries for Vermont counties; many of the cemeteries listed have links to tombstone transcriptions and to topographical maps. Links are also provided for Northwest New Hampshire (Coos and Grafton Counties, only) and to Cemeteries of the Eastern Townships of Quebec Canada.

[Genealogical Society of Vermont](#) is dedicated to assisting genealogists everywhere who are researching their Vermont ancestry.

### [Vermont Cemetery Records](#)

[Vermont Department of Libraries](#) includes links to a wide variety of historical newspapers on their website.

### [Vermont Digger Online Newsletter Archive](#)

The [Vermont Digital Newspaper Project](#), based at the University of Vermont and supported by partnerships with the Vermont Historical Society and Vermont Department of Libraries preserves Vermont's historical newspapers and makes them freely available online.

[Vermont Folklife Center](#) is a nationally-known folklife education organization that uses ethnography—study of cultural experience through interviewing, participation and observation—to strengthen the understanding of the cultural and social fabric of Vermont's diverse communities. VFC's state-of-the-art, climate-controlled archive houses more than 5,000 taped audio and video interviews and 20,000 historical and contemporary photographs, plus transcripts, field notes, family memoirs, and musical recordings.

[Vermont Historical Society](#), located in Montpelier, includes exhibits and information documenting Vermont's history from the time of the Abenaki to the beginning of the 21st century. Their genealogical research library is located at the Vermont History Center in Barre. Resources also include the [Vermont City Directories in Vermont Repositories, 2nd edition, 2013](#) and [Index to Known Cemetery Listings, 5th edition, 2013](#).

### [University of Vermont Silver Special Collections Library](#)

Silver Special Collections holds a wide range of materials—historical manuscripts, books, journals, photographs, and more—pertaining to state and local history. Few if any specifically focus on Jewish life, history, and genealogy, but contain useful information. This archive includes:

- The [Louis McAllister photo collection](#) which contains some 9,000 photographs of Burlington and nearby places.

- The James Detore collection (all negatives) supplements McAllister, with a strong focus on businesses and social groups.
- The archive also holds photo files on Burlington and Vermont by subject.

➤ [Digital Burlington Free Press Archive](#)

## Publications

[Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art and Monuments](#) posts on Vermont (blog).

"From the Archives." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, January 1, 2014.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/vermont-public-television-documentaries-little-jerusalem/>.

Samuelson, Myron, *The Story of the Jewish Community of Burlington, Vermont*, ("With much about the Jewish Community in the State") (Self-published, 1976).

Strogoff, Lottie P. *The Other America, A Story of Life in Vermont at the Turn of the Century*, Dvora Press, Brandeis University (1970).

Simon, Howard, *Voices of the American Jewish Experience*, Jewish Times, (Houghton Mifflin Company 1988). (Some Burlington Jews share their memories in the chapter titled "The American Shtetl.")

Anderson, Elin L., *We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City [Burlington, VT]* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1967).

Philip Rubin, "My Jewish Village in Vermont," *The Jewish Spectator*, January 1949

-- "Small City and Small Town Jews," *Congress Weekly*, February 1952

-- "Boyhood in Vermont," *Jewish Frontier*, January 1954 (describing the Burlington Jewish Community as the last surviving Jewish shtetl in North America).

-- "City Ghetto and Rural Shtetl," *The Jewish Spectator*, December 1954

-- "Singing Boyhood," *The Jewish Spectator*, May 1955

Feuer, Lewis S, and Mervyn W. Perrine. "Religion in a Northern Vermont Town: A Cross-Century Comparative Study." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5, no. 3 (1966): 367–82.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1384167>.

Schine, Robert. "'Members of This Book': The Pinkas of Vermont's First Jewish Congregation." *American Jewish Archives Journal*, 02, 60, no. 01 (2008): 51–98.

[http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2008\\_60\\_01\\_02\\_doc\\_schine-orig.pdf](http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2008_60_01_02_doc_schine-orig.pdf).

Bougerie, Gabrielle. "University of Vermont." UVM National Register North Street Burlington Vermont Statement of Significance. April 1996. Accessed January 13, 2021.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~histpres/HPJ/NR/northstreet/nssig.html>.

## Famous Jewish people from Vermont

### Architecture

- Benjamin Stein (1922-2010) was an architect in the Burlington area. His [papers](#) are held at the University of Vermont.

### Artists and Writers

- Myron Samuelson (1908-1985) was a lawyer and author of *The Story of the Jewish Community of Burlington, Vermont* (1976). His [papers](#) are held by the University of Vermont.
- Ben Zion Black (1886-1972) was an artist who painted the Lost Mural, and a poet. He was also a commercial sign painter, musician, and poet. His [papers](#) are held at by the University of Vermont.

### Business and Finance

- Alex Colodny, grocery merchant from Burlington, Vermont; [papers](#) are held by University of Vermont.

### Education and Research

- Raul Hilberg (1926-2007) was a professor of political science at the University of Vermont, where his [papers](#) are held. He also served on the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1979, and played an important role in the founding and creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

### Public Affairs / Politics

- Madeline Kunin (1933-) was Vermont's first Jewish female governor, elected in 1985. Prior to that, she served in the House of Representatives. After serving as Governor, she was appointed U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, and in 1996, appointed Ambassador to Switzerland by President Bill Clinton. Her [papers](#) are held at the University of Vermont.