

Chapter 1 : Jews in Early America

The history of the Jews in the United States has been part of the American national fabric since colonial times. Until the 1790s, the Jewish community of Charleston, South Carolina, was the largest in North America.

The shooting at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh is believed to be the deadliest attack on Jews in American history. The suspect, Robert Bowers, is reported to be a frequent user of Gab, a social networking site that has become increasingly popular among white nationalists and other alt-right groups. In February 2018, more than 100 gravestones were vandalized at a cemetery outside of St. Louis, Missouri, and at another Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia. Indeed, hate crimes have been on an increase against minority religions, people of color and immigrants. In the 10 days following the presidential election, nearly 100 hate-motivated incidents were reported, many on college campuses. Many of these incidents targeted Muslims, people of color and immigrants, along with Jews. This outpouring of anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic sentiment is reminiscent in many ways of the political climate during the years between the first and second world wars in the U.S. Between 1880 and 1920, over 9 million immigrants entered America. Nearly 22 million immigrants from all over the world entered the U.S. They included approximately 1.5 million European Jews hoping to escape the long-standing legally enforced anti-Semitism of many parts of the European continent, which limited where Jews could live, what kinds of universities they could attend and what kinds of professions they could hold. Fear of Jews and immigrants led Nativists to rail against the demographic shifts and in particular took issue with the high numbers of Jews and Southern Italians entering the country. Immigrants on Ellis Island. As a result, between 1907 and 1954, only 20,000 Jews were admitted into the U.S. The Immigration Act of 1924 tightened the borders further. It transferred the decision to admit or deny immigrants from the immigration officers at the port of entry to the Foreign Service Office, which issued visas after the completion of a lengthy application with supporting documentation. The quotas established by the act also set strict limits on the number of new immigrants allowed after 1924. The number of Central and Eastern Europeans allowed to enter the U.S. The quotas provided visas to a mere 2 percent of each nationality already in the U.S. They excluded immigrants from Asia completely, except for immigrants from Japan and the Philippines. The stated fundamental purpose of this immigration act was to preserve the ideal of U.S. Why does this history matter? The political climate of the interwar period has many similarities with the anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic environment today. Supporters of President Trump during a campaign rally. All over again, we see anti-immigrant sentiment and anti-Semitism, going hand in hand. This is an updated version of an article originally published on April 2,

Chapter 2 : Timeline | American Jewish Historical Society

The American authorities, including high-ranking Jewish leaders, do little to induce Roosevelt to admit European Jewish refugees in substantial numbers to the United States. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. is an exception.

Jews successfully established themselves in the garment trades and in the needle unions in New York. By the s they were a major political factor in New York, with strong support for the most liberal programs of the New Deal. By the mids, however, the Black Power movement caused a growing separation between blacks and Jews, though both groups remained solidly in the Democratic camp. Many Jews rose to leadership positions in the early 20th century American labor movement and helped to found unions that played a major role in left wing politics and, after , in Democratic Party politics. Roosevelt , American Jews voted more solidly Democratic. In the election of , Jewish support for Democrat Harry S. In the th Congress, there are 10 Jews [44] among U. Representatives at the start of the th Congress; [46] 26 Democrats and one Eric Cantor Republican. The total number of Jews serving in the House of Representatives declined from 31 in the th Congress. He served as Majority Leader until , when he resigned shortly after his loss in the Republican primary election for his House seat. Participation in civil rights movements[edit] Members of the American Jewish community have included prominent participants in civil rights movements. In the midth century, there were American Jews who were among the most active participants in the Civil Rights Movement and feminist movements. A number of American Jews have also been active figures in the struggle for gay rights in America. Joachim Prinz , president of the American Jewish Congress , stated the following when he spoke from the podium at the Lincoln Memorial during the famous March on Washington on August 28, From our Jewish historic experience of three and a half thousand years we say: Our ancient history began with slavery and the yearning for freedom. During the Middle Ages my people lived for a thousand years in the ghettos of Europe. It is for these reasons that it is not merely sympathy and compassion for the black people of America that motivates us. It is, above all and beyond all such sympathies and emotions, a sense of complete identification and solidarity born of our own painful historic experience. Most Jews from Eastern Europe favored Zionism, which saw a return to their historical homeland as the only solution; this had the effect of diverting attention from the persecution of Jews in Germany. German Jews were alarmed at the Nazis but were disdainful of Zionism. Proponents of a Jewish state and Jewish army agitated, but many leaders were so fearful of an antisemitic backlash inside the U. One important development was the sudden conversion of most but not all Jewish leaders to Zionism late in the war. Reporters and editors largely did not believe the atrocity stories coming out of Europe. Abraham Joshua Heschel summarized this dilemma when he attempted to understand Auschwitz: Zionism became a well-organized movement in the U. Support for political Zionism in this period, although growing in influence, remained a distinctly minority opinion among German Jews until about 1945, when the early rumors and reports of the systematic mass murder of the Jews in German-occupied Europe became publicly known with the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps and extermination camps. The founding of Israel in 1948 made the Middle East a center of attention; the recognition of Israel by the American government following objections by American isolationists was an indication of both its intrinsic support and influence. This attention initially was based on a natural and religious affinity toward and support for Israel in the Jewish community. The attention is also because of the ensuing and unresolved conflicts regarding the founding of Israel and Zionism itself. A lively internal debate commenced, following the Six-Day War. The American Jewish community was divided over whether or not they agreed with the Israeli response; the great majority came to accept the war as necessary. A tension existed especially for some Jews on the left who saw Israel as too anti-Soviet and anti-Palestinian. They tried to assure Congress that American Jewry was behind the Accord and defended the efforts of the administration to help the fledgling Palestinian Authority PA , including promises of financial aid. In a battle for public opinion, IPF commissioned a number of polls showing widespread support for Oslo among the community. On October 10, 1993, the opponents of the Palestinian-Israeli accord organized at the American Leadership Conference for a Safe Israel , where they warned that Israel was prostrating itself before "an armed thug", and predicted and that the

"thirteenth of September is a date that will live in infamy". Some Zionists also criticized, often in harsh language, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres , his foreign minister and chief architect of the peace accord. With the community so strongly divided, AIPAC and the Presidents Conference, which was tasked with representing the national Jewish consensus, struggled to keep the increasingly antagonistic discourse civil. The conference, which under its organizational guidelines was in charge of moderating communal discourse, reluctantly censured some Orthodox spokespeople for attacking Colette Avital , the Labor-appointed Israeli Consul General in New York and an ardent supporter of that version of a peace process. The Jewish population of the United States is either the largest in the world, or second to that of Israel, depending on the sources and methods used to measure it. Precise population figures vary depending on whether Jews are accounted for based on halakhic considerations, or secular, political and ancestral identification factors. There were about 4 million adherents of Judaism in the U. According to the Jewish Agency , for the year Israel is home to 6. This figure is significantly higher than the previous large scale survey estimate, conducted by the " National Jewish Population estimates, which estimated 5. A study released by the Steinhardt Social Research Institute SSRI at Brandeis University presents evidence to suggest that both of these figures may be underestimations with a potential 7.

Chapter 3 : American Jewish History | JHU Press

And yet American history is full of episodes of physical violence against Jews and Jewish institutions. What follows is a list, far from comprehensive, of some of the many violent attacks.

Earliest surviving Jewish residence in the U. Luis de Carabajal y Cueva , a Spanish conquistador and converso first set foot in what is now Texas in The first Jewish-born person to set foot on American soil was Joachim Gans in Legarde was employed by Anthonie Bonall, who was a French silk maker and vigneron cultivator of vineyards for winemaking , one of the men from Languedoc sent to the colony by John Bonall, keeper of the silkworms of King James I. Solomon Franco , a Jewish merchant, arrived in Boston in ; subsequently he was given a stipend from the Puritans there, on condition he leave on the next passage back to Holland. Governor Peter Stuyvesant tried to enhance his Dutch Reformed Church by discriminating against other religions, but religious pluralism was already a tradition in the Netherlands and his superiors at the Dutch West India Company in Amsterdam overruled him. Religious tolerance was also established elsewhere in the colonies; the colony of South Carolina , for example, was originally governed under an elaborate charter drawn up in by the English philosopher John Locke. This charter granted liberty of conscience to all settlers, expressly mentioning "Jews, heathens, and dissenters. By the time of American Revolution, the Jewish population in America was still small, with only 1, to 2,, in a colonial population of about 2. They played a role in the struggle for independence, including fighting the British, with Francis Salvador being the first Jew to die, [18] and playing a role in financing the revolution, with one of the key financiers being Haym Solomon. President George Washington remembered the Jewish contribution when he wrote to the Sephardic congregation of Newport, Rhode Island , in a letter dated August 17, While everyone shall sit safely under his own vine and fig-tree and there shall be none to make him afraid. Sephardic Jews became active in community affairs in the s, after achieving "political equality in the five states in which they were most numerous. Despite these restrictions, which were often enforced unevenly, there were really too few Jews in 17th- and 18th-century America for anti-Jewish incidents to become a significant social or political phenomenon at the time. The evolution for Jews from toleration to full civil and political equality that followed the American Revolution helped ensure that Antisemitism would never become as common as in Europe. History of Jewish education in the United States before the 20th century Jewish Texans have been a part of Texas History since the first European explorers arrived in the 16th century. Jews intermarried rather freely with non-Jews, continuing a trend that had begun at least a century earlier. However, as immigration increased the Jewish population to 50, by , negative stereotypes of Jews in newspapers, literature, drama, art, and popular culture grew more commonplace and physical attacks became more frequent. During the 19th century, especially the s and s , Jewish immigration was primarily of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany , bringing a liberal, educated population that had experience with the Haskalah , or Jewish Enlightenment. It was in the United States during the 19th century that two of the major branches of Judaism were established by these German immigrants: Several Jewish bankers played key roles in providing government financing for both sides of the Civil War: Grant , angry at the illegal trade in smuggled cotton, issued General Order No. The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled Jews appealed to President Abraham Lincoln , who immediately ordered General Grant to rescind the order. Sarna notes that there was a "surge in many forms of anti-Jewish intolerance" at the time. Sarna, however, concludes that the long-term implications were highly favorable, for the episode: Official government antisemitism continued, however, with New Hampshire only offering equality to Jews and Catholics in , [32] the last state to do so. Grant very much regretted his wartime order; he publicly apologized for it. When he became president in , he set out to make amends. Eager to prove that he was above prejudice, Grant appointed more Jews to public office than had any of his predecessors and, in the name of human rights, he extended unprecedented support to persecuted Jews in Russia and Romania. Time and again, partly as a result of this enlarged vision of what it meant to be an American and partly in order to live down General Orders No.

Chapter 4 : Most Influential Jews of All Time

Encyclopedia of Jewish and Israeli history, politics and culture, with biographies, statistics, articles and documents on topics from anti-Semitism to Zionism.

A significant Jewish community develops in Recife. It does not become a permanent community until the 1840s. Charleston, South Carolina, has an organized Jewish community. Montreal has an organized Jewish community. Under federal laws but not state laws Jews are given full rights. The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion. American Jews protest the persecution of Jews in Damascus. He begins to publish the Israelite, later the American Israelite. Wise calls a meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, to organize American Jewry religiously on a national scale. The Jews of the United States meet in several towns, protesting the action of the papal authorities who seized Edgar Mortara, a Jewish child, and reared him as a Catholic. Benjamin, formerly a United States senator, is appointed secretary of state of the Confederacy. On December 17, General U. Grant expels some Jews from the area occupied by the Army of Tennessee on the charge that they engaged in commercial traffic with the South. The expulsion decree, General Orders Number 11, is speedily revoked by Lincoln. Schiff, later a national Jewish leader, arrives in New York from Germany. Its founders hope to embrace all American synagogues. Several anti-Semitic works are published in New York City. He accomplishes little, if anything. The National Council of Jewish Women is founded. The Jewish Chautauqua Society is organized. Wise denounces the new Zionism of Theodor Herzl. American Jewish Yearbook begins publication. Solomon Schechter is elected head of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He furthers Conservatism as a separate Jewish denomination. Kaufmann Kohler is elected president of the Hebrew Union College. The American Jewish Committee, a secular defense organization, is established by the American Jewish elite. Jewish students at Harvard establish the Menorah Society, a cultural organization. Sidney Hillman arrives in the United States. Later he becomes a famous leader and a prominent New Deal politician. Magnes is its head. A fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory costs the lives of some women. The Intercollegiate Menorah Association is organized. The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is organized. The Promised Land by Mary Antin is published. Moses Alexander, a German Jewish immigrant, is elected governor of Idaho. Henry Hurwitz edits the Menorah Journal. Brandeis is appointed to the US Supreme Court. United States enters World War I. About 1,000,000 Jews served in the armed forces. The British government issues the Balfour Declaration favoring the establishment of a homeland for Jews in Palestine. On November 7 the Bolsheviks gain control of Russia. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, serving the Jewish and general press, is established. Yiddish Art Theater is initiated by Maurice Schwartz. Most notable is the anti-Jewish activity of Henry Ford, It emphasizes the primacy of Hebrew in Jewish culture. This legislation is motivated, in part, by pseudo-scientific racial concepts. Agudath Israel of America, an Orthodox organization, is established. Hebrew Theological College opens in Chicago. Wise founds the Jewish Institute of Religion, training rabbis mostly for the Reform group with a more national orientation than that given by Hebrew Union College. There are 4,000 Jews, 17,000 Jewish organizations, 3,000 congregations in the United States. The American Academy for Jewish Research is established. Judaism as a Civilization by Mordecai Kaplan is published and the Reconstructionist magazine appears. The Rabbinical Council of America, an organization of the English-speaking Orthodox rabbis, is formed. Coughlin, a Catholic Priest, denounces the Jews on the radio. His audience numbers in the millions. Very little is accomplished. There are numerous Jewish generals and several Jewish admirals. Jews become aware of the Holocaust. The American authorities, including high-ranking Jewish leaders, do little to induce Roosevelt to admit European Jewish refugees in substantial numbers to the United States. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. The Central Conference of American Rabbis adopts a resolution agreeing that both the Zionist and anti-Zionist positions are compatible with Reform Judaism. Samuel Belkin becomes the president of Yeshiva College. Eisendrath becomes the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The United States unleashes the atom bomb on the Japanese. Jews are among the nuclear scientists who perfect the atom, hydrogen, and neutron bombs. On May 14 Israel declares its independence. The United States government immediately recognizes the new state.

Israel, provoked by Arab marauders, invades Egyptian territory and is joined by England and France, but all withdraw their forces under United States and Soviet pressure. The quota system is revised, but the admission of immigrants is still rigorously limited. Israel again emerges victorious. Numerous Russian Jews immigrate to the United States. His demise heightens messianic fervor among some of his followers, while the Lubavitch movement continues to grow. The ticket wins a plurality of the votes, but loses the election.

Chapter 5 : 50 Most Influential American Jews

Essential Readings in American Jewish History The bibliography below outlines some of the elemental scholarly works on the history of Jews in the Americas. The American Jewish Historical Society compiles and maintains the list.

Why do people serve in the American armed forces? When and in what contexts did they serve? How did they serve? Although the exhibition focuses on the service of Jewish men and women throughout the history of the United States, the subtext of the entire space is the universality of military service. Visitors learn about the transition from civilian life to military camp through scenes of induction, marching, and other camp activities. A large display case features artifacts relating to military life, including a footlocker, cot, bedding roll. This section also includes displays about early American Jews like Asser Levy, who fought for the right to bear arms in defense of his community in seventeenth-century New Amsterdam; Francis Salvador, who was the first Jew known to die for American independence; and Uriah P. Levy, who served in the US Navy during the War of 1812 and later rose to the rank of commodore despite facing anti-Semitism during his forty-year naval career. Many Jews emigrated from Eastern and Central Europe during this period, and one of the most noteworthy features of the American Jewish military experience is the speed with which immigrant Jews chose to serve their new country and be identified as loyal Americans. The focal point of Spirit is a large-scale video projection, featuring notable moments in American Jewish military history from this period. The film also highlights the achievements of a few exceptional individuals including Colonel Marcus Spiegel, Abraham Krotoshinsky, and Medal of Honor recipient Benjamin Kaufman. Artifacts are included from the conflicts of this period, including Civil War correspondence from Capt. Conviction. As Nazi Germany emerged as a hostile power in Europe, American Jews with strong convictions about liberty and democracy served their country in unprecedented numbers. The Jewish Welfare Board estimated that 1.5 million Jews served in the armed forces of the United States between 1917 and 1945. Conviction tells the story of those American Jews who fought and sacrificed in every branch of service and every theater during World War II. From Rabbi Alexander Goode, who was one of the four chaplains who perished when the U.S.S. *Dorchester* sank, to Frances Slinger, who was the only nurse to die as the result of enemy action in the European Theater, Jews played an important role in the Allied victory. Conviction features two multi-media elements. The first is a touchscreen interactive featuring images of World War II, from mobilization to homecoming. The second is an oral history listening station. Visitors can listen to firsthand accounts of Jewish service members who encountered the Holocaust and liberated survivors. Purpose tells the story of Jewish service during the Cold War through the present day. Both during and after the Cold War, the United States was a cornerstone of global stability, and American Jews served in large numbers as new threats to peace and freedom emerged. These include a camouflage yarmulke kippah made of tent material and provided to Jewish U.S. soldiers. Visitors can learn more about SPC Agami and the other Jewish servicemen and women who died while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan through our Fallen Heroes touchscreen interactive. Before leaving this section of the exhibition, visitors can also learn about Jewish service in the American military since through Service Around the World. In this multi-user interactive, visitors use a timeline to access a series of world maps showing the locations of American military operations. Leaving the Service The final section of the exhibition is Leaving the Service. In a democracy, the military is a unique institution, and when a veteran leaves at the end of an experience defined by discipline and structure, the transition to the civilian world can be difficult. Veterans return to their families and embark upon the next chapter of their lives. Many veterans hold on to mementos to remember their time in the service whether it is a common military item or a souvenir picked up during deployment. A group of display cases highlights these items, including a Spanish-American War commemorative poster and a coconut mailed from a soldier in Guam to his daughter in Virginia during World War II. Leaving the Service also profiles a selection of distinguished American Jews who have served with honor. All have dedicated their lives in one way or another to the armed forces of the United States. Sidney Shachnow is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to the United States as a young man and enlisted in the U.S. Army. His lengthy military career spanned the globe, taking him from Vietnam, where he served with the famed Green Berets, to West Germany, where he worked as a

member of a clandestine army unit that penetrated the Iron Curtain to collect information about the Soviet Union and its allies. He eventually attained the rank of major general, retiring after 40 years of highly decorated service. The finally display shows the work of the Jewish War Veterans of the U.

Chapter 6 : Timeline in American Jewish History | American Jewish Archives

It is the worst single attack on American Jews in the history of the country. And it is one that many who have been monitoring anti-Semitic activity in the United States have been dreading.

The Jews of the United States, University of California Press, Feingold, Henry, et al. The Jewish People in America. Yale University Press, Jewish Silversmith in Colonial New York. Mordecai, An Early American Family. Hill and Wang, Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America. Munich and New York: The Colonial American Jew, Wayne State University Press, Jews and Gentiles in Early America University of Press, The Jews in the American Revolution. Civil War Korn, Bertram W. American Jewry and the Civil War. University of South Carolina Press, Jews and the Civil War: A Reader New York: New York University Press, Immigration and Acculturation Ben-Ur, Aviva. Sephardic Jews in America: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, Holmes and Meier, The German Jews in the United States. Jewish Publication Society, New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehilla Experiment, Columbia University Press, Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation. Cornell University Press, World of our Fathers New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism Cambridge University Press, At Home in America. The Soviet Jewish Americans. Brandeis University Press, Harvard University Press, Jews and Liberalism in Modern America. Princeton University Press, Jews in American Politics Lanham: A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York. Common Sense and a Little Fire: University of North Carolina Press, American Jewish Radicals, Indiana University Press, Torn at the Roots: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties. Jews and American Popular Culture 3 volumes. Jews, Movies and Broadcasting. Jewish Museum and Princeton: The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture Postvernacular Language and Culture. University Press of California, Jewish Views on Multiculturalism in America. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity. Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century. New York Jews and the Great Depression: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage. In Search of American Jewish Culture. University Press of New England, Oxford University Press, A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History. University of Alabama Press, Eisenberg, Ellen, Ava F. Jews of the Pacific Coast: University of Washington Press, To the Golden Cities. Small Town Jews in Industrial America. Rischin, Moses and John Livingston. Jews of the American West. Minnesota Historical Society Press, A History of the Jewish Mother Oxford: A Jewish Feminine Mystique? Marriage, Desertion and Welfare in New York. Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, My Daughter, The Teacher: Women Who Would Be Rabbis. Fighting to Become Americans: Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women. The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life. Jewish Women and the Civil Rights Movement. American Judaism Diamond, Etan. And I Will Dwell in their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia. Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism. Profiles in American Judaism:

Chapter 7 : Sorry, this content is not available in your region.

Lila Corwin Berman is professor of history and director of the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University. November 1 I am a historian of American Jews. My morning last.

They looked and behaved like other colonists: Their religion and their history were the only differences. Their beliefs had gotten them expelled from England in and cast out from Spain in The forced conversions, torture and expulsions of the Inquisition sometimes caused them to change their names and hide their religion, but never to forget who they were. More frequently, Spanish and Portuguese Jews sought refuge in Holland and created a home for themselves in Amsterdam. The Jewish community thrived there; their success allowed them to migrate to Brazil, Suriname, Jamaica and Curacao, where they built synagogues and purchased ground for cemeteries. Their names were Spanish and Portuguese: Henrique, Isaac Mesa and Isaac Levy. Their outlook was cosmopolitan and their trading interests became widespread and varied and vital to the economy of the colonies. Soon more Jews arrived from Europe and the Caribbean and the Jewish community expanded to Newport, Charleston, Savannah and Philadelphia, always seeking the freedom to practice their religion and their professions. New York was one place where Jews were given more latitude: Germany, Poland, Bohemia and Russia. All Jews were subject to discriminatory rules for trade and citizenship. But in America, it was sometimes possible to challenge discrimination. Little by little, in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and New York, Jews won the right to be naturalized, to trade freely and to worship publicly. They were able to serve in the military and to provide funds for the infant country. They were Patriots and Loyalists, Whigs and Tories, rich and poor. They were, in short, just like other Americans. Still, some individuals stand out for their achievements in American and in Jewish history. The thirteen whose lives are commemorated in Patriots Park one from each colony and nine others were extraordinary in their own time and in ours. According to a letter of commendation passed by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania in , it appears that Major Bush has, on many occasions, distinguished himself in the public service, especially in the winter of , when the service was critical and hazardous. Colonel Bush was ultimately released in exchange for British prisoners held by the Continental forces. From there he repeatedly petitioned Washington for a diplomatic post, but was unsuccessful, despite being highly recommended by others close to Washington. Although he apparently had no formal medical training, Bush had evidently picked up enough medical knowledge, perhaps during the time he spent in London, to be generally referred to as Dr. In , he married Nancy Ann Marshall, most likely in Philadelphia. He died in and is buried in the Friends Burial Ground in Philadelphia. Abraham Cohn New Hampshire Cohn, one of the many Jews who fought for the Union some , Jews fought for the South , won the Congressional Medal of Honor for valor above and beyond the call of duty at the Battle of the Wilderness and the Battle of the Crater in He was born in Silesia, Germany in At the Battle of the Wilderness, he rallied and reformed the disorganized fleeing troops from several regiments and established a new line of defense that held its ground. At the battle of Petersburg, Virginia, the Battle of the Crater on July 30, , he bravely and coolly carried orders to the advanced Union line under severe fire from the Confederate troops. After the close of the war Captain Cohn settled in New York and began a successful business career. He married and was the father of eight children. He established himself as a merchant, and though in America only a year at the outbreak of war, aligned himself with the patriot cause. Jacob Hart was at the head of the list of contributors, with the largest contribution out of 5, pounds contributed. They soon moved to New York where he emerged as an important member of the Jewish community, serving as parnas [president] of Shearith Israel. Judah Hays took his son into his shipping and retail business and, upon his death in , left him the business and largest share of his assets. He immediately reestablished himself in the trans-Atlantic trade. In , seventy-six men in Newport were asked to sign a declaration of loyalty to the American colonies that included the phrase, "upon the true faith of a Christian. Hays signed when the Christian portion of the oath was omitted. The Hays family left Newport for Boston ahead of the British occupation in He opened a shipping office in Boston and was among the first merchants there to underwrite shipbuilding, trade and insurance to newly opened Far Eastern markets. In , Hays became a

founder and the first depositor of the Massachusetts Bank, still doing business today as part of the Bank of America. Abraham, Judah and Rebecca. Hays also helped to establish the New England Masonic movement. Moses Michael Hays provided financial support to beautify Boston Common, establish theaters and endow Harvard College. Hays descendants helped found the Boston Athenaeum and the Massachusetts General Hospital and remain prominent in Boston public life to this day. Lopez, born to a well-to-do Converso family, was named Duarte [Edward] Lopez at his birth in Portugal in . He joined his older brother Moses in Newport, Rhode Island. Upon arrival in Newport, Duarte, Anna and their daughter Catherine reverted to Judaism and changed their names to Aaron, Abigail and Sarah, respectively. With the help of his brother Moses, Aaron set himself up in business. He participated with Jacob Rodriguez de Rivera in the manufacture and sale of spermaceti [whale oil] candles. By his business activities had grown to include whaling and a few ventures in the slave trade, as well his main traffic in the export of Newport manufactures such as furniture, axes, plank and board, flour, barrel staves and salt fish. As an English crown colony, trade from Rhode Island to the mother country was a privilege restricted to citizens. In Lopez, along with his friend and business partner Isaac Elizer, sought naturalization in Rhode Island in order to be able to trade freely with Britain. To circumvent the ruling, Lopez set up residence in Swansey, Massachusetts, and was finally naturalized at Taunton, Massachusetts in October , where naturalization of Jews was allowed. Elizer was naturalized in New York a year later. The Rhode Island authorities accepted the naturalizations from the sister colonies. Following the death of his wife Abigail in , Lopez married Sarah Rodriguez de Rivera, the daughter of his business partner, Jacob Rodriguez de Rivera. The American fight for Independence brought significant economic upheaval to Newport merchants, Lopez included. One of his ships, the Hope was seized by privateers as it traveled between Newport and Jamaica, and in , Lopez petitioned the Continental Congress for protection and restitution, which was granted; however, it is doubtful that any damages were ever paid¹. Fairly early in the war the British had taken and occupied Newport. In , Lopez evacuated his family to Leicester, Massachusetts, where he set up a retail shop and a modest commodities trade via overland routes through Salem, Boston and Providence. Over the course of the next four years, he became a key supplier to the American forces, providing such necessities as flour and leather breeches. Aaron was born in London sometime between and to a family whose history can be traced to the beginnings of the Spanish Inquisition. He arrived in New York in and soon purchased acres of land, which was ultimately the basis for much of modern Bound Brook. His trade in spices and liquor succeeded and he became known for his generous contributions to Jewish communal causes in New York and New Jersey. Aaron died in . Jacob Mordecai was both a patriot and a pioneer in the education of women. He was born in Philadelphia in , the son of Moses and Esther Mordecai. At age 13, Mordecai served as a rifleman when the Continental Congress was resident in Philadelphia and later helped supply the Continental Army as a clerk to David Franks, the Jewish quartermaster to General George Washington. In , the couple moved to Warrenton, North Carolina. Mordecai became a tobacco merchant there, but he was more interested in education and scholarship. In , his wife Judith died in childbirth. Initially Mordecai and his wife Rebecca taught all the classes but were later joined by their daughter Rachel and two of his sons. The school succeeded thanks to its innovative plan of moral instruction and sensitivity to both Christian and Jewish observance. Students of all faiths were represented and each group was able to observe its own holidays and practices. In , at age 56, ten years after opening his Female Academy, Mordecai decided to sell the highly successful enterprise and move his family to Richmond, Virginia. Within five years had established a five-vessel fleet for his import-export business. In he was elected president of the Norfolk city council and in was commissioned colonel of a regiment of Virginia volunteers. He was appointed vice-consul for both Denmark and the Netherlands at Norfolk and in , President John Quincy Adams appointed him collector of customs for the port of Norfolk. Fortune did not always smile on him, however. In , Congress passed the Embargo Act, which forced Myers into bankruptcy. Although he was never able to recover his fortune, his debts were repaid by the time of his death in . The classic Georgian townhouse that he and his wife Eliza built in still stands and is a popular tourist attraction. This is one of the few historic homes in which Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, is celebrated. Myer Myers – Connecticut Myer Myers was born in , the son of Solomon and Judith Myers, and was a dominant figure among a well-established community of

silversmiths during the colonial era. Although it is not known with whom the silversmith Myer Myers apprenticed, he became a freeman of the City of New York on April 29, 1733. In about 1735, Myers married Elkaleh Myers-Cohen. By November 1735, silversmith Benjamin Halsted had joined Myers in the firm of Myers and Halsted, goldsmiths, advertising fancy goods, readymade plate, and jewelry for sale at their premises at the lower end of King Street. The firm continued to make all sorts of work, in gold and silver, on a custom, made-to-order basis. Myers was a leader of the Congregation Shearith Israel, and crafted religious objects for both Jewish and Protestant congregations. In 1740, Myers married his second wife, Elkaleh Joyce Mears. Their fourth son, Benjamin Myers, was born in Norwalk in 1741. The couple had a total of seven children during the period from 1741 to 1750. Myers and his family fled to Philadelphia by 1750, that city having the largest Jewish community in the Colonies. However, upon the evacuation of New York by British troops late in November 1756, Myers returned north. By 1757, he had relocated to Pearl Street, where he remained until his death in 1780. He created the magnificent Torah finials rimonim which can now be found in the Touro Synagogue. Haym Salomon – Pennsylvania Haym Salomon was a Polish-born Jewish immigrant to America who played an important role in financing the Revolution.

Chapter 8 : Sorry, this content is not available in your region.

The amazing story of Jewish influence on the founding fathers of American democracy. The creation of the United States of America represented a unique event in world history - founded as a modern republic, it was rooted in the Bible, and one of its earliest tenets was religious tolerance. This is.

The creation of the United States of America represented a unique event in world history – founded as a modern republic, it was rooted in the Bible, and one of its earliest tenets was religious tolerance. This is because many of the earliest pilgrims who settled the "New England" of America in early 17th century were Puritan refugees escaping religious persecutions in Europe. These Puritans viewed their emigration from England as a virtual re-enactment of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. They were the new Israelites, entering into a new covenant with God in a new Promised Land. In America, however, there was far more freedom to experiment with the use of Biblical law in the legal codes of the colonies and this was exactly what these early colonists set out to do. The earliest legislation of the colonies of New England was all determined by Scripture. At the first assembly of New Haven in 1637, John Davenport clearly stated the primacy of the Bible as the legal and moral foundation of the colony: The Plymouth Colony had a similar law code as did the Massachusetts assembly, which, in 1630, adopted the so-called "Capitall Laws of New England" based almost entirely on Mosaic law. Of course, without a Jewish Oral Tradition, which helped the Jews understand the Bible, the Puritans were left to their own devices and tended toward a literal interpretation. This led in some instances to a stricter, more fundamentalist observance than Judaism had ever seen. Many of these colleges even adopted some Hebrew word or phrase as part of their official emblem or seal. The Columbia seal has the Hebrew name for God at the top center, with the Hebrew name for one of the angels on a banner toward the middle. Dartmouth uses the Hebrew words meaning "God Almighty" in a triangle in the upper center of its seal. So popular was the Hebrew Language in the late 16th and early 17th centuries that several students at Yale delivered their commencement orations in Hebrew. In America, Bible study and Hebrew were course requirements in virtually all these colleges and students had the option of delivering commencement speeches in either Hebrew, Latin or Greek. Thus, we can be sure that a majority of these political leaders were not only well acquainted with the contents of both the New and Old Testaments, but also had some working knowledge of Hebrew. We see them adopting the biblical motifs of the Puritans for political reasons. For example, the struggle of the ancient Hebrews against the wicked Pharaoh came to embody the struggle of the colonists against English tyranny. Numerous examples can be found which clearly illustrate to what a significant extent the political struggles of the colonies were identified with the ancient Hebrews. The motto around the seal read: Even the basic framework of America clearly reflects the influence of the Bible and power of Jewish ideas in shaping the political development of America. Nowhere is this more evident than in the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence: This and the other documents of early America make it clear that the concept of a God-given standard of morality is a central pillar of American democracy. Many more things can be said about the Jewish influence on the values of America, but this is, after all, a crash course. We next turn to the Jews themselves. The first Jews arrived in America with Columbus in 1492, and we also know that Jews newly-converted to Christianity were among the first Spaniards to arrive in Mexico with Conquistador Hernando Cortez in 1519. In fact, so many Jewish conversos came to Mexico that the Spanish made a rule precluding anyone who could not prove Catholic ancestry for four generations back from migrating there. Needless to say, the Inquisition soon followed to make sure these Jewish conversos were not really heretics, and burnings at the stake became a regular feature of life in Mexico City. As for North America, the recorded Jewish history there begins in 1654 with the arrival in New Amsterdam later to be known as New York of 23 Jewish refugees from Recife, Brazil where the Dutch had just lost their possessions to the Portuguese. New Amsterdam was also a Dutch possession, but the governor Peter Stuyvesant did not want them there. Jews and the American Revolution By and the War of Independence, there were an estimated 2, mostly Sephardic Jews men, women and children living in America, yet their contribution to the cause was significant. For example, in Charleston, South Carolina, almost every adult Jewish male fought on the side of freedom. In Georgia, the

first patriot to be killed was a Jew Francis Salvador. And additionally, the Jews provided significant financing for the patriots. The most important of the financiers was Haym Salomon who lent a great deal of money to the Continental Congress. He was never paid back and died bankrupt. President George Washington remembered the Jewish contribution when the first synagogue opened in Newport, Rhode Island in 1790. It was called the Touro Synagogue and it was Sephardic. He sent this letter, dated August 17, 1790: "While everyone shall sit safely under his own vine and fig-tree and there shall be none to make him afraid. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow to it. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken it. This was an interesting choice of words on the part of Washington, but, as noted above, it is not surprising in light of the enormous influence that the Hebrew Bible had on the pilgrims and on the founding fathers of the new nation. American Ambivalence Toward The Jews It must be noted, however, that some of the other founding fathers were a bit more ambivalent about the Jews than was Washington. John Adams, who said some highly complimentary things about the Jews, also noted that "it is very hard work to love most of them [the Jews]. And he looked forward to the day when "the asperities and peculiarities of their character" would be worn away and they would become "liberal Unitarian Christians. Until 1800, the Jewish population of America was only about 6,000. This changed in the 1800s when Reform German Jews, who had scrapped traditional Judaism and were not "too Jewish," began to arrive. The great migrations of poor, oppressed Jews from Eastern Europe would follow near the turn of the century. But before we take up that story, we must look to see what was happening to the Jews of Europe. Van Der Kemp, 16 February 1822 I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of another sect I should still believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate for all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization. They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this earth. The Romans and their Empire were but a bauble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three quarters of the globe and have influenced the affairs of mankind more, and more happily than any other nation, ancient or modern. Article 55 of 68 in the series Jewish History.

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While the Ashkenazi Jews outnumbered the Sephardic ones by , the character of the American Jewish community remained Sephardic through the American Revolution. Colonial American synagogues adhered to Sephardic ritual customs and administered all aspects of Jewish religious life.