

Ellen Eisenberg  
Willamette University

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## Western Jewry during the Period of Mass Migration A Case for Regional Distinctiveness

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Over the last decade, there has been renewed scholarly debate about the significance of regionalism in understanding the American Jewish experience, much of it focusing on the American South. In 1996, Mark Bauman critically assessed the argument for southern distinctiveness, arguing that “Jews in the South were influenced by the regional subculture in a relatively marginal fashion,” that many distinctively southern themes actually alienated southern Jews, and concluding, “To a remarkable degree... their experiences were far more similar to those of Jews in similar environments elsewhere in America than they were to those of white Protestants in the South.”<sup>1</sup>

Bauman was one of several scholars whose work shifted the debate about southern Jewish identity, and called for a rigorous examination of that identity. He criticized the use of “superficial” cultural markers such as the consumption of grits, or the use of “ya’ll” as markers of regional identity. In addition, he made the important point that, rather than constantly comparing various regional Jewish communities to New York, historians should examine the experiences of Jews in various less metropolitan regions to one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Bauman *The Southerner as American: Jewish Style* (Cincinnati, 1996). See also Mark Bauman and Bobbi Malone, “Introduction” *American Jewish History*, Special issue on Directions in Southern Jewish History, September, 1997: 191-193.

The recent literature on southern Jewry provides a helpful starting point for examination of the Jewish West. Yet the conclusion by scholars like Bauman and Marc Lee Raphael that southern Jewish distinctiveness has been exaggerated does not necessarily mean that all regionalisms are unimportant in interpreting the American Jewish experience. While acknowledging, for example, that western Jews concentrated in commercial roles that were similar to those of Jews in other regions (including the South), Bill Toll argues that they “could also absorb a different sense of who they were becoming in part because of their neighbors and the local political climate.” “Regional differences,” he continues, “may have had very little impact on religious practices, but substantial effects on how Jews related to one another and to their gentile neighbors.”<sup>2</sup> Differences in regional religious and racial landscapes had a profound effect on the place of Jews in local hierarchies and in the degree to which they were accepted. Leonard Rogoff documents a stream of racial thought in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century South that called Jewish racial identity into question and argues that Jews “were accepted as white, but their precise racial place was not fixed.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast, in the West during the same period, there is evidence of extensive Jewish office holding, of Jewish recognition as town founders, and even inclusion of Jews as members of nativist organizations, suggesting that Jews in the region continued to be fully accepted as whites and as regional civic leaders.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> William Toll “A Regional Context for Pacific Jewry: 1880-1930” unpublished manuscript, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Rogoff “Is the Jew White?: The Racial Place of the Southern Jew” *American Jewish History*, Special issue on Directions in Southern Jewish History, 85(3) September, 1997: 195-230.

<sup>4</sup> Toll “Regional Context”: 4; Ellen Eisenberg “Fellow Whites or Fellow Minorities? Ethnic Identity and Responses to Prejudice Among Jewish Oregonians,” paper presented at *Through the Prism of Race & Ethnicity: Re-imagining the Religious History of the American West*, Arizona State University, March, 2006.

I hope to contribute to this discussion today by exploring some of the ways in which Jewish communities in the Pacific West experienced the period of mass migration. Since time limits make it impossible to fully discuss the issue, I have chosen to focus on two factors that are critical in distinguishing western Jewish communities: the demographics of the migration that reached western cities, and the local racial/ethnic landscape that they entered. Using examples drawn from the Pacific Northwest, I argue that, while these communities certainly share characteristics with those in other regions remote from Jewish centers, these factors did contribute to a distinctive pattern of community identity and development in the Pacific West by mitigating tensions between the established Jewish community and newcomers.

There are several demographic patterns that are particularly noteworthy. First, the early East European Jewish migrants to the region were relatively acculturated, due to the indirect migration routes that they followed. The West's role as a region of second settlement is critical to understanding both the character of Jewish communities that emerged, and their timing. Indeed, it was due to these migration patterns that the emergence of visibly Jewish communities was delayed in the West. Not until after the turn of the century did chain migrations lead to an influx of immigrants directly from Europe, resulting in the creation of identifiable East European Jewish institutions and neighborhoods. Another critical factor was the direct immigration of Sephardic Jews to the Pacific West, which made these communities uniquely diverse.

As was the case in the South, East European Jewish immigrants came to the Far West later and in far smaller numbers than to eastern and midwestern metropolitan areas. Yet in contrast to the South, where, according to Lee Shai Weissbach, their influx led to the

growth of smaller Jewish centers and the creation of new ones, the migration to the Pacific West was focused overwhelmingly on the region's major cities—in the Northwest, Portland and Seattle.<sup>5</sup> Yet, rather than experiencing a mass influx overwhelming the existing communities, their population grew gradually. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Portland and Seattle's Jewish populations were just reaching 5000. Portland didn't pass 10,000 until the 1920s, and it took Seattle's community until 1940 to reach that number.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being gradual, the growth that occurred in the region began late. Few of these immigrants reached the Northwest before the 1890s. Portland's first Russian congregations were not founded until the early 1890s, and the mutual aid and burial society founded in Seattle in 1891 did not formally incorporate as a congregation until 1900.<sup>7</sup>

The delay suggests a significant pattern in the migration: few East European Jews journeyed directly to the Pacific West. These immigrants rarely entered the country through western ports, and, prior to their arrival in the region, they often sojourned for months or years elsewhere in the United States or Canada. Of 122 identifiable Jewish immigrants who naturalized in Seattle between 1907 and 1914, only thirteen entered the country through that port. A majority (66 percent) first arrived in eastern ports, most frequently, in New York. One found his way from Galveston to Seattle, while 24 (20

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<sup>5</sup>Lee Shai Weissbach "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South" *American Jewish History* 85(3): 235-242. See also Weissbach *Jewish Life in Small Town America* (New Haven, 2005).

<sup>6</sup>Portland Jewish population stood at approximately 5000 in 1907, and Seattle was approximately 4500 in 1910. Portland and Oakland figures from Lee Shai Weissbach "The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration" *American Jewish History* 78(1): 84-86; Seattle figure from Molly Cone, Howard Droker, Jaqueline Williams *Family of Strangers: Building a Jewish Community in Washington State* (Seattle, 2003): 134 and Lori Etta Cohn "Residential Patterns of the Jewish Community of the Seattle Area, 1910-1980—(MA Thesis, UW, 1982): 29-30.

<sup>7</sup> Cone: 109-110.

percent) apparently sojourned in Canada.<sup>8</sup> Not until World War One made travel across the Atlantic dangerous did western ports become a significant source for Jewish arrivals, and even then the numbers of annual entries were in the hundreds.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to their arrival in the Pacific Northwest, families spent years living in North America, often in places quite distant from Jewish centers. Among 83 Russian Jewish families who arrived in Portland during the 1890s, 31 had children born in other western or midwestern states before their arrival in Oregon.<sup>10</sup> Immigrants filing naturalization papers in Seattle had children born in places as diverse as Duluth, Minnesota; Trinidad, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.<sup>11</sup> At least 18 of the Portland families were members of Jewish agricultural communities in the Dakotas during the 1880s and early 1890s. Oral histories of Jews in both cities—and in cities up and down the West Coast-- commonly recount sojourns eastern cities, rural America, or in Canada.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, many of the East Europeans who eventually settled in western communities were not *new* immigrants, but—like their counterparts who settled in other relatively remote areas-- had already adjusted to life in America. A 1922 study of Seattle's immigrant Jewish neighborhood found that the overwhelming majority of grammar school students—80 percent-- were born in the United States. While approximately 240

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<sup>8</sup> Seattle naturalization records, 1907-1914. Of those arriving in the East, 68 landed in New York City, 6 in Boston, 5 in Philadelphia, and 2 in Baltimore. Of those who entered the U.S. from Canada, 12 entered through midwestern states, one through Vermont, and 11 by crossing from British Columbia into Washington at Blaine.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America *The Jewish Immigration Bulletin*, 7<sup>th</sup> annual report, New York, March 1916: 9-10.

<sup>10</sup>Ellen Eisenberg "Transplanted to the Rose City: The Creation of East European Jewish Community in Portland, Oregon" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19(3), Spring, 2000: 86. It is important to note that this represents a minimum number, since sojourns are detectable in these records only when a child was born in another state.

<sup>11</sup> Seattle naturalizations records, 1907-1914.

<sup>12</sup> Cone: 54. See, for example, the oral histories of Rachel Silverstone and Nathan Krems, University of Washington Archives.

of these students reported that Yiddish was their parents' native language, only 138 spoke Yiddish at home.<sup>13</sup> Immigrants who had sojourned in rural America were not only likely to be conversant in English, but also had valuable experiences that greenhorns lacked. Homesteaders had dealt with government agents, bankers, and local authorities. In some cases, they had even held public office, as was the case with several North Dakota colonists who served as members of the school board before relocating to Portland.<sup>14</sup> Peddlers had wandered the countryside, learning the market and the language. These experiences proved invaluable, particularly for those who arrived in the 1890s, before clear immigrant Jewish neighborhoods were established. With few manufacturing jobs available, most immigrant Jews entered the same sector as their predecessors and as Jews throughout the American hinterland: trade.<sup>15</sup> As small-scale merchants, peddlers, and junk dealers, these newcomers had to be able to interact with a clientele that was English speaking.

In addition to easing the transition into western communities, the indirect route to the Pacific Northwest likely reinforced a less than traditional religious outlook, especially among the early arriving immigrants. East European Jews who entered the country through New York, but sojourned in places such as North Dakota, Manitoba, or Kansas had made the decision to leave a place with a strong Jewish infrastructure for one with little or none. Although oral histories and personal accounts make clear that some made heroic efforts, maintaining traditional religious requirements in isolated locales was

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<sup>13</sup> Esther Midler "Neighborhood Survey for the Educational Center of the Council of Jewish Women" (Seattle, 1922). Manuscript in Joseph Cohen papers, University of Washington Archives (accession number 2116-7): 4

<sup>14</sup>Eisenberg, "Transplanted to the Rose City"; Eisenberg "From Cooperative Farming to Urban Leadership" in *Jewish Life in the American West*, Ava Kahn, editor. The Autry Museum and University of Washington Press, 2002 (reissued by Heyday Books, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> William Toll "Jewish Families and the Intergenerational Transition in the American Hinterland," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 1993 12(2); on Seattle, Cone: 59.

exceedingly difficult. It seems unlikely that families unwilling to compromise on dietary laws and ritual observance would choose to relocate to communities where rabbis, kosher meat, and synagogues were unavailable.

These factors had a clear impact on the character of the institutions and community life created by these early arriving immigrants. Among the most striking is that—in contrast to the experience in other regions where East Europeans built Orthodox congregations<sup>16</sup>-- the first institutions established in the region by East European newcomers were not small, Yiddish speaking, traditional synagogues. The first two Russian Jewish congregations in Portland advertised sermons in English and German, the participation of well rehearsed choirs and even instrumental music during the service.<sup>17</sup> As early as 1900, Portland's Russian congregation, Neveh Zedek, had adopted mixed seating.<sup>18</sup>

Even in cases where the newcomers held fast to religious orthodoxy, there is evidence of considerable early acculturation. For example, while Seattle's Congregation Bikur Cholim steadfastly retained its Orthodox identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>19</sup> it was, at the same time, clearly an *American* congregation. Among those members identifiable in the 1910 census, the overwhelming majority (53 out of 56) spoke English and had lived in the United States for over a decade (31 out of 46).<sup>20</sup> The program for the Bikur Cholim's

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<sup>16</sup> Weissbach "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South": 243-4.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenberg, "Transplanted to the Rose City".

<sup>18</sup> Albert A. Ruskin "Looking Backward" *The Scribe* (Portland), March 20, 1936: 2.

<sup>19</sup> This is evident in its constitution, Congregation Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath, University of Washington Archives, Accession # 2450-5, Box 1, folder 3: 1921 constitution.

<sup>20</sup> The individuals listed on a 1910 document titled "Membership of Congregation Bikur Cholum" were located in the 1910 U.S. manuscript census using the electronic census images on Ancestry.com.

"Membership of Congregation Bikur Cholum," Jacob Kaplan papers, University of Washington Archives, Accession # 1960-2,3,4, folder 14; U.S. manuscript census, King County, Seattle, 1910 (on Ancestry.com). Totals differ from category to category because information on the census is sometimes incomplete or illegible.

1917 Fair and Bazaar is a testament to its membership's acculturation. Printed entirely in English, the program lists events including performances by orchestras and other musical groups, dances, and addresses by Washington's governor and Seattle's mayor, as well by both male and female congregational leaders.<sup>21</sup> Such programming makes clear that the small businessmen of this congregation wanted to retain orthodox practice, but not traditional insularity. Indeed, when Bikur Cholim was founded as a mutual aid society in 1891, its articles of incorporation required that officers be citizens of the United States. After its transformation into a congregation, its minutes, newsletters, and official documents were recorded in English from its founding, although a few documents, like the original by-laws, were printed in both Yiddish and English.<sup>22</sup> This, again, stands in contrast to Weissbach's finding that East European congregations in the South often conducted business in Yiddish well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

While later arrivals, following chain migrations, were more likely to arrive directly from Europe and became the force behind several new, more traditional congregations formed after the turn of the century, the patterns established by their predecessors had a major impact on the character of the emerging communities. Up and down the West Coast, identifiable Jewish neighborhoods, with traditional institutions and businesses serving a Yiddish speaking and observant clientele, began to form after the turn of the century. Los Angeles provides an exaggerated example of this pattern: a small Jewish mercantile settlement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city's Jewish

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<sup>21</sup> Souvenir Program, Congregation Bikur Cholim, March 11, 1917. University of Washington Archives, Jacob Kaplan Paper, accession number 1960-2,3,4, box 1, folder 14. The days program appears on page 17.

<sup>22</sup> Congregation Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath records, University of Washington Archives. 1891 Articles of Incorporation of "Chevra Bikurcholum"(sic) Jacob Kaplan Papers, University of Washington Archives, accession # 1960, box 1, folder 11.

<sup>23</sup> Weissbach "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South": 246-7.

community would become the country's second largest by mid-century. It would develop a full array of Yiddish cultural institutions, including theaters, literary groups and newspapers. Yet in Seattle, when Polish immigrant, skilled printer, and orthodox leader Sol Krems founded Seattle's *Jewish Voice* in 1915, he could have used the "cases of handmade Yiddish type" that he brought with him, but chose to print it in English. As his son recalled, "most of the population of Seattle spoke English, it may have been accented but it was [English]... [They] spoke and read English."<sup>24</sup> In both Portland and Seattle, while some immigrants subscribed to eastern Yiddish papers, the local Jewish papers served the entire community—in English.

Thus, migration patterns helped western communities avoid the sharp clash experienced elsewhere between established German-Jews and East European immigrants, as early arrivals established contacts and set the tone for these communities. In many western communities, like Tacoma, while immigrants set up a new synagogue rather than joining the Temple, the two groups "mingled" in a single B'nai B'rith lodge and in most other community activities.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, the differences between East European immigrant Jews and their predecessors mattered in the Northwest as they did elsewhere, but the particular migration patterns meant that the lines were less sharply drawn than in the South where, according to Weissbach, the immigrants constructed "essentially separate sub-communities."<sup>26</sup>

The strong presence throughout the West—and particularly in Portland-- of Jews from the Prussian province of Posen was another demographic fact that helped to bridge

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<sup>24</sup> Nathan Krems Oral History, University of Washington Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Cone et. al.: 71.

<sup>26</sup>Weissbach "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South": 243.

the cultural and religious gap.<sup>27</sup> Congregations with substantial Posener populations, like Ahavai Shalom in Portland, were well established by the time the Russians began to arrive. Like their German-American counterparts, the members of these congregations tended to be upwardly mobile merchants who were eager to engage in local affairs. Though they encouraged their rabbis to reach out to the larger community through sermons in English and participation in public events, they also retained traditional ritual practices and supported the newcomers' emphasis on studying Hebrew and supporting Zionism. The blend of community engagement, acculturation, and tradition appealed to many of the early arriving East Europeans.

Portland, where the early Russian immigrants tended to be particularly acculturated, provides a striking example. There, the gap was sufficiently narrow that the more traditional of the two established congregations, Ahavai Shalom, founded in 1869 by a group of Poseners, and the immigrant Russian congregation Neveh Zedek, actually merged briefly in the mid-1890s.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the records of the Free Loan Society in Portland demonstrate that the men of the pioneer German and Posener families served on the board of directors together with the early arriving, acculturated Russians.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, as was the case in other non-industrial regions, the occupational profile of these communities, where established community members and immigrant Jews regardless of regional origin were all concentrated in the trade sector, also helped to reduce tension.

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<sup>27</sup> For discussion of Poseners in the West, see Glanz, Norton Stern (*Jews in the 1870 Census of LA*), Vorspan and Gartner, and Rosenbaum *Visions of Reform* and Hasia Diner *A Time for Gathering*; Ava Kahn and Ellen Eisenberg "Western Reality: Jewish Diversity during the 'German' Period" forthcoming, *American Jewish History*.

<sup>28</sup> Kahn and Eisenberg "Western Reality". The two congregations merged permanently more than half a century later, in 1961. See Eisenberg, "Transplanted to the Rose City".

<sup>29</sup> Free Loan Society records, Oregon Jewish Museum. Records for the 1910-1913 period show prominent, established leaders such as Ben Selling and David Solis-Cohen serving as officers alongside Russian immigrant leaders like Israel Bromberg, Isaac Swett, and David Nemerovsky.

Although a huge gap separated the wealthy descendants of pioneer Jewish merchants and the immigrant peddlers, they did not see each other across a class divide. Over time, immigrants were often able to move from peddling to established shops, and it was not uncommon for their children to enter the professions. The gap between the pioneer generation and the East Europeans—never a class conflict—had begun to dissipate by the 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

Another significant demographic pattern in these communities is the presence of a significant number of Sephardic immigrants during this period. A few American born Sephardic families were part of the migration west from the start, but the largest number immigrated after the turn of the century directly from Turkey and Rhodes. Seattle's Sephardic community, which has been called the "mother colony of Sephardic life on the West Coast,"<sup>31</sup> grew through chain migrations from two pioneers in 1902, to 600 in 1913, and over 2000 by the 1920s. This made Seattle's the second largest Sephardic community in the country, after New York.<sup>32</sup> In percentage terms, this was certainly one of the most significant Sephardic populations in the country—approximately one quarter of Seattle Jewry by the 1920s.<sup>33</sup>

The customs and appearance of Sephardic Jews seemed so exotic that the existing community initially had a hard time believing that these newcomers—with whom they

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<sup>30</sup> William Toll, *Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*: 108, 126-130. The gap appears to have persisted somewhat longer among women; Ellen Eisenberg "Immigrants, Ethnics and Natives: Jewish Women in Portland, 1910-1940" unpublished paper presented at the Western Jewish Studies Association, March, 1999. Teens whose families belonged to the Reform temple, Beth Israel, were discouraged from dating teens who attended other synagogues.

<sup>31</sup> William Kramer *Sephardic Jews in the West Coast States* volume II "Los Angeles" (Western States Jewish History Association, 1996): 313.

<sup>32</sup> Cone: chapter 3. See also, Albert Adatto: "Sephardim and the Seattle Sephardic Community" (MA Thesis, UW, 1939)

<sup>33</sup> A 1922 survey estimated Seattle's Jewish population to be between 6,000 and 7000, and put the Sephardic population at over 1500. Of just over 1200 Jewish children enrolled in public schools, nearly 400 were Sephardic. Esther Midler "Neighborhood Survey for the Educational Center of the Council of Jewish Women" (January, 1922) University of Washington Archives: 3.

shared no common language-- were Jewish. A leader of Congregation Bikur Cholim, actually wrote to Jewish authorities in New York in order to verify the claims of the Sephardim that they were Jewish.<sup>34</sup> For their part, the Sephardim at first preferred socializing with local Greeks to Ashkenazim. Although they also resided in the Central District and started small businesses, the Sephardim remained socially, culturally, and religiously separate. Oral histories emphasize the insular nature of the Sephardic community, where nearly all socializing took place within large family circles, or through the synagogues. In addition, in contrast to Seattle's East European congregations, which functioned primarily in English, the Sephardic congregations did not provide English language sermons until the 1930s. According to the 1922 survey, Ladino was spoken at home by 90 percent of the Central District's Sephardic children, even though the majority of those children were American-born.<sup>35</sup>

While established Jews assisted the Sephardim, they did not mix socially. The same study lamented the self-imposed segregation, suggesting that separate dances should be provided for the community's youth since the two "do not mix well at social functions."<sup>36</sup> When second generation Sephardic Jews began entering the University of Washington in the late 1920s and early 1930s, they found that the Jewish fraternities

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<sup>34</sup> Cone: 60.

<sup>35</sup> Midler: 4. The survey lists the numbers of children speaking various languages at home, and the languages spoken by their mother and father for the total population of Washington Elementary School—the school with the largest Jewish immigrant population. The two largest non-English languages are Yiddish (listed as "Jew.") and "Spanish." Given that the report indicates that there was a substantial population of Sephardic children at the school and that there is no indication of any other Spanish-speaking group present, it can be assumed that this referred to the Sephardic's Ladino, sometimes called Judeo Spanish.

<sup>36</sup> Midler: 17

excluded them—a practice continued until the WWII period.<sup>37</sup> The presence of a large, culturally and socially distinct Sephardic group created a dynamic that was different from—and had the effect of reducing-- the classic German-East European schism. As the children of East Europeans entered university and the professions, they—unlike the Sephardim-- entered fraternities and, increasingly by the 1930s and 1940s, the Reform temples established by the early pioneers.

In addition the region’s distinctive demographic patterns, the local context—particularly the region’s ethnic/racial landscape-- also helped to shape western Jewry. Most critical were the long-standing acceptance of Jews as “whites,” and the relative lack of anti-Semitism in the region. While Jewish westerners were aware of stereotypes and prejudice, anti-Semitism was generally regarded as an aberration during the period of mass migration. This provides an important point of contrast with other regions of the country.

In the East and Midwest, as well as the South, the marked increase in anti-Semitism that coincided with the mass migration has been well documented.<sup>38</sup> Established Jewish communities believed that the arrival of destitute immigrants, whom they regarded as backwards and even primitive, fanned the flames of anti-Semitism. Programs aiming at diverting the flood of immigrants away from eastern population centers or “Americanizing” them reflected these concerns.

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<sup>37</sup> The practice of blackballing Sephardim from the Jewish fraternities at the University of Washington is mentioned in several oral histories, including those of Albert Franco, Mary Capeloto, and Benjamin Asia, University of Washington Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Rising levels of anti-Semitism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban Northeast and South have been well documented. Notable outbreaks of anti-Semitism occurred in the South, especially during the economic crises of the 1890s and Jews, who had been seen as unambiguously white, began to find that identity questioned. See Rogoff; Eric Goldstein *The Price of Whiteness* (Princeton, 2006): 52-62; Matthew Frye Jacobson *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, 1998).

Both the smaller scope of the migration and the historic acceptance of Jews minimized such concerns in the West. Jews throughout the West had long functioned as part of the “Anglo” community.<sup>39</sup> Both their role as business and town founders and, ironically, rampant anti-Asian sentiment, helped to cement Jewish acceptance as whites. As historian Frank Van Nuys argues, “Racial constructs aided in the categorization of immigrants and minorities as either unassailably white and thus possessed of proper citizenship qualities, or decidedly nonwhite and therefore undesirable as possible citizens.”<sup>40</sup>

In addition to their prominence in civic affairs, even groups like the Native Sons of Oregon, an organization largely dedicated to venerating white history in the state, accepted Jews.<sup>41</sup> Sol Blumauer served as a founding trustee of Native Sons, and was elected to its presidency at the turn of the century. Blumauer, his wife, and at least six other Jewish Oregonians were named as native sons or daughters and honored with pictures and/or biographical profiles in the inaugural volume of the organization’s publication, *Oregon Native Son*.<sup>42</sup> Such inclusion is vivid evidence of Jewish acceptance

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<sup>39</sup> A particularly interesting example of this has been documented by Linda Gordon in *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Harvard, 1999). Gordon demonstrates that Jewish men and women (as well as other “Euro-Latins” whose whiteness would have been questioned in the East) functioned as part of the “Anglo” group that seized “white” Irish orphans from their would-be adoptive Mexican families.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Van Nuys *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (University Press of Kansas, 2002): : 24, 15.

<sup>41</sup>On the role of the Native Sons organizations in defining “white space,” see David Glassberg “Making Places in California” in *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (U Mass, Amherst, 2001): 167-202.

<sup>42</sup>*Oregon Native Son*, volume I, May 1899: 3; July, 1899: 138, 175. In California, leading Jews like Congressman Julius Kahn played prominent roles in the Asian exclusion movement. See for example, *Proceedings of the Asiatic Exclusion League, 1907-1913* (New York, 1977). Kahn appears repeatedly in these Proceedings, and is listed as a member of the League’s Lecture Bureau. *Proceedings*, September, 1908: 13.

as whites, and profiles of Jewish Oregonians contrast sharply with the publication's stereotype-laden treatment of groups perceived as non-white.<sup>43</sup>

Even during the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon in the early 1920s there were few local expressions of anti-Semitism. The Oregon Klan avoided criticisms of Jews because there were "so many good and influential Jewish citizens in the city." Oregon Grand Dragon Gifford found it necessary to muzzle the traveling Klan lecturer, R.H. Sawyer, for expressing hatred of Jews and foreigners.<sup>44</sup> A Klan effort to use a boycott of the Meier and Frank department store to protest the appointment of Julius Meier to a state committee in 1925 failed after the *Oregon Voter*, the state's leading public affairs journal, condemned the action.<sup>45</sup> Four years later, in a landslide, Meier became the only independent ever to be elected governor, winning more than twice as many votes as either his Republican or his Democratic rival.

The widespread, longstanding, and continuing prominence and inclusion of Jews in the West meant that the established Jewish community's response to the immigrants was not framed by the same anxieties about anti-Semitism that informed responses

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<sup>43</sup> Frequent stories on Native Americans present a range of stereotypes, from romanticized versions of supposed Indian lore, to depictions of "savages," in both cases clearly situating them as the other, in contrast to white pioneers. On the rare occasion that African Americans were mentioned—even as "Negro pioneers"—they are often described in negative terms ("the sons of Ham"), and their shortcomings highlighted ("truth was never a conscious ingredient of his character"). None of those mentioned as "Negro pioneers" were included as members of the all-white organization. Asian immigrants are notable in *Native Son* for their absence. The one mention of the possibility of "the Chinaman a Pioneer" discusses an effort by the British to trick a group of Chinese men into settling in the area and helping to secure the British claim. The story explains that the groups never landed, and suggests that they have no place in pioneer history, for "what ultimately became of them has not been made a matter of history." *Oregon Native Son*, volume I. On Native Americans see recurring stories on "Indian War Recollections", for example, August 1899: 210-11; examples of romanticized Native American lore are also frequent. See, for example, October, 1899: 305. One story recalls the first "neck tie party" (lynching) in the region, recalling in celebratory tones the way a white trader acted as "judge, jury, and executioner," and "Mr. Indian dangled to the music of the breeze," October 1899: 337. On African Americans, see "Negro Pioneers; Their Page in History": 432-433; on "Chinamen a Pioneer": 530.

<sup>44</sup>Lawrence J. Saalfeld *Forces of Prejudice in Oregon, 1920-1925* (Archdiocesan Historical Commission, Portland, 1984): 30.

<sup>45</sup>Steven Lowenstein *The Jews of Oregon* (Portland, 1987): 171.

elsewhere. This is not to say that established communities welcomed the newcomers with open arms. The influx, and particularly the development of concentrated neighborhoods, did arouse concerns, and established Jews in the Northwest, like their counterparts elsewhere, sponsored programs to “Americanize” the newcomers, and worried about their impact on community resources. Still, the immigrant communities that emerged in the West-- and the established community’s responses to them-- were products of distinctive migration patterns and local conditions, not simply echoes of the eastern experience. The racial/ethnic landscape which rendered Jews members of the western “Anglo” community, like the distinctive migration patterns that shaped their arrival, mitigated tensions and created distinctive patterns of regional Jewish identity and development.