

HOW TO WRITE THE HISTORY  
OF AN AMERICAN JEWISH  
COMMUNITY



JACOB R. MARCUS



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By

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**H***ave confidence in yourself.* All of us today are history-conscious. I suppose that one of the reasons for this is that we are aware of the fact that the United States today is one of the most powerful countries in the world. Our sense of identification with our American homeland and our age-old Jewish history and tradition encourage us to look with pride upon our dual past. We know that some of our Jewish communities in this country go back in their beginnings to the 1600's. As various anniversaries arise, we feel the desire to write the history of our own Jewish community.

If you, too, are prompted by such an impulse, the best of luck to you! The job may look very formidable, but even if you have never had any experience at this sort of work, you can succeed. Do not be dismayed, but have confidence in yourself. Actually, it is not too difficult to write the history of the Jews of your town, and we can promise you that you will find the task not only an enjoyable but even a fascinating one.

*Editorial Committee.* The first thing to do is to appoint an advisory committee to organize the work. An ideal committee should include a rabbi, a teacher of English, a teacher of history, a newspaper man, and a lawyer. The committee should not write the book; one man should do the job.

***How to Collect Historical Material.*** We are fortunate that there are a number of brochures, essays, and pamphlets which tell us how to go about the business of collecting material, organizing it, and writing it. Before he even begins to collect a single fact, it would be wise for the research worker to examine and to read the following small books and essays. If you have time to read only one, we would recommend Donald Dean Parker and Bertha E. Josephson, *Local History; How to Gather It, Write It, and Publish It*, Social Science Research Council, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, New York (latest edition). We also recommend that you read Homer Carey Hockett's *Introduction to Research in American History*, The Macmillan Company, New York. The following four essays and pamphlets are also very helpful: George Shelton Hubbell, *Writing Documented Papers*, College Outline Series, Barnes and Noble, Inc., New York; Marvin Wilson Schlegel, *Writing Local History Articles*, Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History, Montpelier, Vermont, Vol. II, No. 2, May, 1949; Charles A. Anderson's *How to Write the History of a Church*, published by the Presbyterian Historical Society, 520 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa.; David C. Duniway's *What You Can Write About the History of Your Home Town*, Oregon State Archives, Bulletin No. 1, Publication No. 10, Salem, Oregon. The last three mentioned pamphlets are either free or can be purchased at a nominal cost. Do not fail to write for copies. The more material you have to guide you, the better you can prepare yourself.

***How To Take Notes.*** After reading this brief bibliography on how to collect historical materials, you will realize and appreciate the necessity of working with cards or sheets of uniform size. In our own experience we have always found it helpful to work with the regular letter-size sheets, 8x11 inches. We strongly advise that whenever you copy anything —by hand or by typewriter—you slip

in two carbons so that you have three copies altogether. There are a number of reasons for this. You may lose one of your sheets. In addition, you will certainly want to use the material on one copy for several different paragraphs and even for different chapters. The more duplicates you have of the same material, the less copying you will have to do, and the easier it will be to prepare your narrative.

Be very meticulous in copying. Always recheck what you have copied. Do not fail to put some sort of heading or indication of subject at the top left. This will give you a hint as to the contents of what you have below. It is always very important—and necessary—that at the bottom of the sheet you should record accurately the source from which you have secured your material. If it is from a book, give the author, the title, the place in which the book was published, the date of publication, and the number of the page from which you copied your note.

***What To Collect: Jewish Records.*** You are still not ready to start collecting material, even though you have your paper and carbon and have read the pamphlets and books which tell you how to do a good job. It is important, first of all, that you secure some information about your specific task. Someone before you has probably written something about the local Jewish community or synagogue. Read what has been written. If no one has prepared even a small paper on the subject, then get hold of *The Jewish Encyclopedia* or *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* in your local library and read about your state or the town in which you live. Now you are ready to go to work.

The basic institution in any Jewish community is the synagogue, therefore your prime original records are the synagogue minutes. You will find them in your synagogue—if you look hard enough. If they are not there, go see one of the older officers and persuade him to disgorge them. If the congregation does not have a copy of its original charter, you can usually get a copy at the state capital. The

charter can be important to you because it may give you the exact name of the original synagogue or religious society; it will often give you the motivations which induced the founding fathers to create that institution and, what is equally important, it will give you the names of the founders. Thus you will have a basis for further research. After you have worked through the congregational minute books and other records, picking out what in your judgment is significant and interesting, you might find it worth while to write for further information about your congregation or religious community to one of the national Jewish religious organizations. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (838 Fifth Avenue, New York 21) will be glad to consult its records and send you information about your synagogue. The same service, we are sure, will be rendered to you by the United Synagogue of America (3080 Broadway, New York 27) and, also, by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (305 Broadway, New York 7).

Cemetery and burial records are not only important, but are often very interesting. The burial books frequently note where a man came from and even tell you about his last sickness. It would be very advisable to copy all extant tombstones for at least the first generation of the community's existence. In the past, tombstones told where a man came from, and nearly always gave a brief and interesting biography. After the early tombstones have been copied, the data should be filed in a safe place.

Years ago many of the congregations preserved marriage records, copies of the marriage contracts, and detailed lists of the children who had been circumcised. The marriage papers are valuable because they will give you the names of some of the earliest settlers, for they signed the documents as witnesses.

Among the oldest institutions in any community are the various philanthropic organizations and societies. Many of these kept records, and they may still be available. It is important that you go

to every society in town that has engaged in charitable work and read through its papers. (You may have to promise the overcautious board members that you will not breathe a word about the doles which were handed out to the poor grandfathers of latter-day rich grandsons!) Sometimes, to your gratification and surprise, you will find that a society has preserved the records of similar older organizations which were taken over. Be sure to check every local charity. Get in touch with the people in charge of child and health care; go to the hospitals and clinics, and visit the offices of the local branches of national and overseas philanthropies.

Not infrequently, various national organizations have made surveys of your town. If you write to the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in New York, you may find that it will have copies of surveys which throw light on the social welfare activities of your community. Of course, if there is a paid local Jewish social worker, turn to him first of all for information on anything which concerns the local Jewish philanthropies.

You will find it worth your while to consult the minutes and papers of the local brotherhoods, sisterhoods, the Council of Jewish Women, and other similar organizations. Do not forget the youth organizations, and the Jewish troops of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts.

If there is a Bureau of Jewish Education in your community, it will have papers which you will want to examine. For the older period there will be congregational religious school records. In some of the larger towns you will have Yiddish language schools, and all-day schools or "parochial" schools, whose history should be included in your researches. Nowadays, educational surveys are being made in many communities. The American Association for Jewish Education (New York City) can probably inform you if one was made in your town.

There is hardly a community in the country that does not have a B'nai B'rith lodge. Fortunately, a number of the older lodges have still preserved their manuscript records. You will enjoy reading them. If the local lodge has lost its older minute books, you may secure some information about the lodge in the printed reports of the districts. These reports will be in the office of the district secretary. If there are any other Jewish fraternities, lodges, or labor groups in your city, you must not fail to interview the president or the secretary. If there is a Jewish Community Center, or a settlement house, or a social club, ask for the records and examine them carefully. The materials dealing with the social clubs are particularly interesting. Some of those clubs go back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Ask some of the older generation what they can tell you about the Phoenix Club or the Allemania or the Standard or the Harmony or the Concordia. (Don't let the names Harmony and Concordia fool you! The old-timers were a pugnacious lot.) You may find their records among those of the present-day country club.

Most of the organizations created to help immigrants have died out since our quota system was introduced almost a generation ago. However, the records of such societies may still be available. Try to find them.

You ought to have no trouble in writing the history of the local Zionist societies and even of a non-Zionist group like the American Council for Judaism. Many of them have adequate records.

Go to the office of the Jewish welfare fund and secure whatever material it has on the different local, national, and overseas funds and movements to which it contributes. If you have a Community Council in your town, it will have additional information on the local groups, and no doubt in its offices you will also find housed the Community Relations Committee which handles all matters of civic protection. The local B'nai B'rith lodge will also have an Anti-Defamation League Committee which works along similar lines. The civic protection organizations will have much of value to give

you on the problems of anti-Semitism and economic discrimination, on interfaith relations, and on the climate of opinion insofar as it affects the Jew.

In every large community there are local branches of most national Jewish organizations. Either they or their national headquarters can be of service in supplying information that will serve your purpose.

If yours is a small community, there is no reason why you cannot have a detailed survey made of it as it is today. There are a number of national organizations that will send you samples of survey questionnaires and will tell you how to proceed. For instance, you can write to the Conference on Jewish Relations, the Jewish Occupational Council, the American Association for Jewish Education, and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. If you are in doubt about the address of any of these societies, examine the latest issue of the *American Jewish Year Book*, under "National Jewish Organizations."

A great deal of work that you will want to do, you will be happy to know, has already been done for you by the United States government. In the thirties, during the depression, the Work Projects Administration (WPA) made a Historical Records Survey which set out to collect and describe all community records: court materials, church and synagogue archives, vital statistics, county inventories, etc. This was done in every state in the Union. Materials were examined, described, and introduced by a brief historical sketch. A number of these surveys were published in mimeograph form. An example of this type of publication is the *Inventories of the Church and Synagogue Archives of Mississippi*. Mimeograph descriptive catalogues were published also for Tennessee, Michigan, Louisiana, and Colorado. In all probability, there are many similar works in unpublished form, in typescript, in the different state libraries at the capitals, or in the state university libraries, or in some other depository. If this material could be uncovered, it would save hundreds of hours of labor. A note of warning: inasmuch as

most of the workers were amateurs, and some were not particularly competent, much of this material should be used with caution.

***Personal Papers.*** When your father or grandfather or more remote ancestor came to this country from abroad, he brought certain official papers with him: a passport, a good-conduct certificate, apprenticeship papers, and the like. If you will speak to your friends, you may find that some of these papers have been preserved. They are frequently helpful in giving us data dealing with the first member of a family to immigrate to this country. Documents such as these tell you where a man came from, the nature of his schooling, and the trade he pursued.

By far one of the richest sources of information in a community is old letters, various types of documents, naturalization papers, deeds, army records, memoirs, and manuscript or printed diaries which have been preserved by some historically-minded member of the family. Keep digging, and you will be surprised at how much of this treasure-trove you will be able to uncover.

***Personal Interviews.*** Our country and our communities are so young that even today there are people living whose fathers or grandfathers (surely great-grandfathers!) go back to the very beginnings of our communal life. Cincinnati, for instance, shelters the oldest Jewish community west of the Allegheny Mountains. The first Jews came here in the years between 1817 and 1820. A grandson of one of them is still living in that city (1953)! You realize, therefore, how important it is to interview older men and women. If possible, get in touch with the descendants of pioneer families. Do not limit your interviews merely to Jews; some of the older non-Jewish families can tell you a great deal about the first Jews who came to town. Almost every town has a local historian—frequently a non-Jew—who has a great many papers of his own, or who knows where to look for material dealing with the older families.

In general, it is well to bear in mind that it is advisable to interview all outstanding Jewish personalities in the community, no matter what their professions happen to be. It would be wise, in questioning an old-timer, to carry with you a portable dictating machine with a microphone attachment. Even if you use a recording machine, you will ultimately write or type notes of the interview. Be sure, here also, to copy your notes in triplicate. Date every interview. You may find, after a while, that you will run out of questions. If you do not know what to ask, write to the American Jewish Archives. It will send you an autobiographical form containing many of the important questions.

When you talk to persons whom you interview, ask them for the names of other old settlers or their descendants, even if these latter-day descendants live out of town. Write to those members of the family who are out of the city, and ask for any papers that they may have. You may find, to your gratification, that they have saved many.

When you have finished your interview, come back at another time, read aloud what you have written, and ask the person who is giving you the information to make any corrections or additions that may be necessary. It would be wise, also, to submit the same interviews to others of the same generation or to persons who may have some knowledge of the same period or events.

When writing down what people tell you, bear in mind, constantly, that memory is a treacherous thing. Some old folks tend to embellish their stories by dramatizing themselves. In general, we would recommend that you exercise a healthy skepticism, not only toward all oral material, but also toward all written and printed records which you examine. Out of his own bitter experience the historian has learned to trust no statement completely. You would do well to remember the fatuous proverb of the moron: "I know it's true; I seen it in a book." You will never go wrong if you memorize and bear in mind the following three basic rules which every good historian follows slavishly: Check, check once more, and then recheck again!

***Jewish Magazines.*** Your task will be made much easier if there is a Jewish periodical in your town. Get hold of a copy of a file beginning with the first issue, and work carefully through it. Read everything it contains about your community, its outstanding individuals, and its institutions. Do not overlook the advertisements; they are frequently a mine of information. If your town does not have a Jewish paper, then use the one from the town nearest to you.

Years ago some of the national Jewish periodicals carried local columns from all over the country. That was certainly true of *The American Israelite* of Cincinnati. That weekly is an important source of material for communities in many states and territories, at least for the nineteenth century. If you are in doubt as to what Jewish newspaper or magazine you ought to use for the early history of your city, all you have to do is to consult the list of Jewish magazines in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. The older periodicals are all listed under the article "Periodicals" in Vol. IX, beginning on page 616. You will find additional information in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, in Vol. VIII, in the article "Periodicals and Press," beginning on page 452. You will, of course, want to locate the library where the publication you seek is to be found. You will probably get your answer by going to your public library and examining the following two reference works by W. Gregory: *Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada* and *American Newspapers, 1821-1936*. Inasmuch as libraries will not send you their old magazines and newspapers because they are rare, you may find it necessary to make microfilm copies. If you know what material you want, and if there are not too many pages, then photostats are much better. Although microfilm copies of magazines can run into money, it may still be cheaper than traveling to another city and spending your time there in the libraries. Any microfilm that you buy will have to be projected on a viewer or a reader, but you ought to have no trouble finding such readers or viewers in your local library or in a nearby university.

***What To Collect: General Records.*** In spite of the fact that you will be engaged in writing Jewish history, and not general history, you would be making a great mistake in limiting yourself to specifically Jewish sources, manuscript or printed. From a historical point of view, or shall we say from a statistical point of view, only a small part of the life of the typical American Jew is reported in the Jewish records. As an American, the major part of his time is spent in common, in mutual relations, with his non-Jewish fellow citizens. Much of what he does finds its historic deposit in the city, state, and national government records.

This relationship of the Jew to his fellow-townsmen is documented in a variety of records. Much is to be found in the papers at the city hall or at the county courthouse. But do not make the mistake of thinking that all your county records are at your countyseat, for counties have been subdivided and countyseats have been changed. The county records may be a hundred miles away or they may have been transferred to an official state archival depository. Your county clerk will tell you where the old papers are, if they are not in his possession.

You will want to check peddlers' licenses, marriage, birth, and death records, and, of course, all types of deed books. The wills and letters of administration of the early settlers are rich in information. The wills will give you details of family, of wealth, and of charitable bequests, and thus throw light on early institutions. From the administration papers, which frequently contain inventories, you will be able to describe in detail how the first settlers furnished their houses and with what comfort or discomfort they lived.

Though it is not always easy to consult and to check the civil and the criminal court records, the results will often be worth the trouble. (Please bear in mind, however, that the older settlers—even your own family ancestors!—were not always angels. If you should find that one of your ancestors was a horse thief, or a smuggler, there

is, of course, no absolute need for you to report this fact—unless your conscience compels you to tell the whole truth.)

More important cases that were referred to courts of appellate jurisdiction, and even to the United States Supreme Court, have been published. These records have been very carefully indexed, and any lawyer can either dig them out for you or teach you, in a relatively short time, how to find the material yourself. More than once the children of pioneers disagreed as to the disposal of the family property and brought their problems to a superior court where the printed record, though not always edifying, is nevertheless very instructive. Only too often, groups within a synagogue went to law, for petty or for very important reasons. For instance, when the Charleston, South Carolina, Temple Beth Elohim became a Reform congregation, it was involved in court litigation with the Orthodox members. The record of that historically illuminating suit is available in any good law library.

Tax lists, which are nearly always available, are among our most important sources. They tell you when people came to town, how much money they made or lost. By comparing the taxes the Jews paid with those paid by non-Jews you can determine the degree of success which Jews attained in the general community.

The Board of Education in your town may have some of the old public school records going back for years. If you have time and the necessary assistance, it may pay you to go through those papers. They will tell you who went to school, how long they went, and how well they did. The absentee lists on the high holy days in the fall should be very suggestive. In the first place, they will more or less indicate who were Jews, and they will also give you some picture of how religiously observant the Jewish community was.

***Directories.*** Residential directories, such as you will find in many banks and public institutions, are a good source for your purpose. Fortunately, such directories go back to the very beginnings of almost

every city. If your public library does not have all the directories, write to the Library of Congress. It may have the missing numbers, or it will tell you where to find them. Directories give the names, occupations, and addresses of the adults in every family. Do not forget to read and check the advertisements you will find in them. They are rich in information dealing with the occupational life of the people in whom you are interested. For the period beginning with the last decades of the nineteenth century, old telephone directories also are very helpful. You will find them in the telephone company's offices. Here, too, the advertisements in the back, arranged according to occupational or commercial or professional distribution, are invaluable for the student of economic history.

*General Newspapers.* Although the general (non-Jewish) newspapers are not so rich in information for your purpose as the local Jewish community periodical, nevertheless they are indispensable for you. If you want to do a good job, you will have to scan the newspapers that have been published in your town. Go through them carefully, particularly for notes about religious matters. The synagogue was—probably still is—the heart of every Jewish community. Watch for Jewish names, for meetings, for social affairs, for Jews in politics, for honors accorded to Jews. Read the court news carefully. Read all the advertisements. This seems like a lot of work—and it is—but after a while you will know what to omit, and the scanning will go more quickly than you imagine. Try to determine to what extent Jews were pioneers in commercial and industrial enterprises.

In one respect the general newspapers are more important than the Jewish periodicals, because they will probably give you more information on the activities of individual Jews who were engaged in literary or scientific pursuits or who manifested interest in the fine arts.

Through the influence of some member of your community you will no doubt be able to have access to the reference files, to the “morgue,” of the local newspapers. These files can be of value to you. Do not fail to consult them.

***Historical Societies, State Libraries, and Archives.*** There is hardly a well-populated county in the United States that does not have some form of local historical society or a collection of historical materials on deposit in the public library. This center for local history should be one of the first institutions that you ought to visit. If there is no city or county historical society, then there will be a state historical society or a state library or archival division. Most of these state historical organizations—and even some of the local historical societies—publish source materials and magazines. If these publications are not indexed, go through them carefully for references which you can use. Make it your business to go to the state historical society or library or archives and examine the catalogues there. You will find that they have references to the biographies of notables which have appeared in various printed works. Frequently, they have manuscript material invaluable for your purpose. State libraries, like that at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, or the one at Sacramento, California, or the library of the State Historical Society of Missouri, at Columbia, Missouri, have hundreds of thousands of cards. Never go to any institution of this type without having with you a relatively complete list of the names of the early settlers of your town.

If you do not know the name and address of your local or county or area historical society, then consult *Historical Societies in the United States and Canada*, a handbook, published by The American Association for State and Local History, Washington, D. C., 1944, compiled and edited by Christopher Crittenden and Doris Godard.

*The Jew as a Citizen.* It is true that the local newspapers will tell you a great deal about the Jew as a citizen. They will mirror his activity in government and in politics. If, however, you want to do a more thorough job, you will do well to consult all the city and county records. These will frequently reveal his participation in the town council and on the county boards. The records in the state capital will tell you of his activity in the Lower or in the Upper House. If some member of your synagogue or community was ever sent to Congress, the Various types of congressional publications will give you some indication as to his activity as a congressman. It is not always easy to trace and to describe the records of those citizens who occupied judicial offices, whether in the state or in the federal courts, but the lawyers in your community will help you gauge and estimate the careers of such men.

Among the records which are frequently worthy of investigation are those of the Chamber of Commerce, of the local labor unions, and of the non-sectarian lodges such as the Masons. If the secret societies or lodges do not permit you to examine their records, they will, we are sure, be glad to abstract the Jewish material for your purposes. This can be done by some Jewish member of the organization.

It is worthwhile studying the activities of Jews in the local service clubs: in Rotary, Kiwanis, the Lions, and the like. Please notice to what extent Jews are represented in the different service clubs. In some communities some of these organizations refuse to admit Jews. A study of the records of membership in all types of local organizations, social and professional, will throw a great deal of light on the presence or absence of ethnic, social, and religious prejudice.

In Cleveland, as we know, the Community Chest—the first in the country—saw the light of day through the efforts of a Cleveland Jewish citizen. There is not a Community Chest in the country in which members of the Jewish community have not participated

actively. The extent of the participation of the Jew in the general philanthropies of the city in which he lives is an interesting one. Try to evaluate this participation on the basis of careful research. You may find, to your surprise, that Jewish philanthropists have shown little interest in the local colleges, universities, symphonies, and other cultural institutions.

In the post-Hitlerian period, as a result of various tensions that have developed, or to prevent the development of tensions, Mayors' Friendly Relations Committees have been established. Their records are open to responsible researchers. Various types of interfaith activities, as reflected in the National Conference of Christians and Jews and similar organizations, furnish interesting themes for research and study. The superintendent of public schools can enlighten you as to his intercultural program of furthering understanding between all religious and racial groups.

There is usually an outstanding non-Jewish or general literary society in town. It may go back for decades if not for centuries. The record of Jewish participation will no doubt be made available to you.

***Census Records.*** Valuable material for purposes of history can be secured from censuses. Although it is not well known, there are state censuses as well as national censuses. For a list of available censuses made by the respective states, the following pamphlet is very helpful: *State Censuses 1790-1948*, prepared by Henry J. Dubester, Chief, Census Library Project, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., 1948, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., price 20 cents.

Of course, the national censuses are more useful. The decennial censuses which may be consulted extend from 1790 through 1870. The first census, that of 1790, has been published, and there are data there dealing with the first Jews. That census, however, is limited to

just about a dozen of the earliest states. After 1790 the census which first has considerable useful data is that of 1850. From that year on the censuses begin to list the names of all members of the family, their age, sex, and color, the occupation of the wage earner, the value of the family real estate, the place of birth, literacy, marriage status, slave-holdings, citizenship, etc. Copies of the 1850 census, on cards, are frequently found in the state libraries. If you wish to purchase microfilms of the decennial census of your county or town, you can do so by writing to the National Archives. They are relatively inexpensive, and they are well worth the time expended on research.

**War Records.** Most states have war record publications describing the service of all individuals. Frequently, regimental and division histories also are found on the library shelves. If you are seeking information about specific individuals, and you do not have access to the proper publications, you can write directly to the Adjutant General of your state and also to the Adjutant General of the Army at Washington. They will always be glad to give you the information which you seek.

We are fortunate that we already have some published material dealing with Jews who have served their country in America's wars. Incomplete lists will be found in *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*, by Simon Wolf, edited by Louis Edward Levy, Philadelphia, 1895. The National Jewish Welfare Board, in 1947, published two volumes of material dealing with World War II. These volumes, *American Jews in World War II*, are very helpful for research. Volume two contains a detailed list by states of all Jewish men who served in the Armed Forces.

**Business Records.** Most businesses of any size have at some time published a pamphlet or brochure describing their history and development. They may have advertisements which were published

on some anniversary and contain interesting historic material. Much of the story of the different types of occupations will, of course, come out in interviews with individual Jewish businessmen.

***Photographs.*** It is well worth while collecting photographs of members of the community, of the institutions, of social events, and of the different business houses. Frequently, large stores and concerns will have pictures of their business beginning with the first store or shop opened. Thus they can document their growth in a series of photographs. In the event that the family or the firm does not have these pictures, it may be possible to pick them up at a local photographer who has old files, or to secure them from one of the newspapers of the town. The local historical society or library will probably also have a collection of photographs. The Library of Congress and the National Archives have huge picture collections. There may be some prints in their files which will throw light on the history of your city.

***Published Materials on Jews.*** Almost all congregations today publish bulletins or programs. Make good use of them. They are one of our basic sources for the life of the core institution of the Jewish community. Inquire for older published anniversary histories of the community's synagogues and other organizations. If there is no history of your local Jewish community, use an area history or a state history. There are histories of the Jewry of every state, although some of them are very small and have little value. One of the better state histories is that of Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina* (1905). A work of this type is indispensable for anyone working in South Carolina history.

History material dealing with Jews will be found not only in the specifically Jewish publications, but also in the general histories of a town, county, or state. Turn to the index and look under "Jews,"

“churches,” “religion,” and, of course, under the names of the individuals who were outstanding in their generation. The county histories should always be consulted. They are rich in detail and will nearly always contain some biographies of interest to you. Frequently, they will have to be used with caution, for only rarely were they written by competent historians. Nevertheless, they contain much that is worth while. Your local town library will nearly always contain all published county and area histories. Sooner or later the town newspaper, the general newspaper, will publish a jubilee or anniversary edition. Such issues rarely fail to carry detailed stories on the history of the Jewish community. The newspaper editors will tell you what anniversary numbers they have published. Like the general press, the Jewish periodicals have issued special anniversary or jubilee numbers. Sometimes during the high holy day season they will issue a special expanded edition which will contain a great deal of historical material. *The Reform Advocate* of Chicago—it has, unfortunately, ceased to appear—published special historical numbers for almost every state in the Mississippi Valley. These special editions can be secured from the larger Jewish libraries. Most of those volumes are to be found in the Hebrew Union College Library of Cincinnati. No doubt, inter-library loans can be arranged with the Public Library of Chicago to secure copies of these special state issues. *The Southern Israelite* of Atlanta, Georgia, occasionally publishes anniversary issues. Typical is the one which was published on July 20, 1945. That was a twentieth anniversary feature issue and contained considerable material of interest dealing with the history of the Jewish communities of the South which it serviced.

***Library Resources.*** Naturally, you will consult the catalogue of the local public library. The librarian will inform you whether he has a collection of clippings, essays, vital statistics, unpublished historical records, and the like. Frequently he has. In quite a number

of the libraries you will find special manuscript or typescript volumes containing excerpts from the local press. Often, these, too, were made under the auspices of the Work Projects Administration. There are such records in Fort Worth, Texas, in Cleveland, Ohio (*Annals of Cleveland*), and in other cities. Your local librarian will also have access to a list of all imprints, books, pamphlets, and broadsides that were published in the early days of the state or territory. You may find that some of the first pamphlets or pieces of music were printed or published or written by persons in whom you are interested.

Such early imprints by Jews are, of course, of considerable value for research purposes.

Whenever you have trouble securing material, or if you need aid or advice, go to the local historian, or to the town librarian, or to the rabbi. If they cannot help you, write to the Director of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Archives has detailed catalogues and indices as well as thousands of pages of manuscript material from all the states in the Union.

Check the index volume to the first twenty volumes of the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. All the later publications have indexes at the end of each volume. The writings of the Society are very helpful. Write for information also to the Librarian-Editor of the American Jewish Historical Society, 3080 Broadway, New York City; to the Jewish Scientific Academy, New York City; or to the Reference Librarian, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

If you know the title of a Jewish book that you wish to consult, and it is not found in your home town, you can secure it on an interlibrary loan from the Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati 20, Ohio, or from the Jewish Theological Seminary, 3080 Broadway, New York City. The Jewish works of the Library of Congress are also at your disposal. The American Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library have excellent Americana libraries, but the books do not circulate. (However, they

can be consulted on the premises.) All these libraries will be glad to check their catalogues for you.

The director and the archivists of the American Jewish Archives will be happy to read your manuscript and to give you professional advice. Even after you have finished your job of writing, if your detailed notes are legible, typewritten, and documented, they should not be destroyed. The American Jewish Archives will be glad to examine them, and, if it finds that they contain unpublished material, it will be glad to preserve them and make them accessible to research students.

*The Technique of Writing History.* Do not be disturbed if you have had no experience in the past in writing history. With a little preparation you, too, can write something that is worth while and helpful. If you will again turn to the books and pamphlets which you first used to secure advice on how to collect material, you will find that there are some very helpful chapters which will tell you how to write after you have collected your material. Turn to Hockett, *Introduction to Research in American History*, and read the chapter on "Historical Composition." Pick up your copy of Parker and Josephson, *Local History*, and read the section on "Composition and Technical Details in Historical Writing." In Schlegel, *Writing Local History Articles*, read the paragraphs beginning with the subdivision on "Organizing." In Hubbell, *Writing Documented Papers*, study Part VII: "Writing and Documenting the Paper."

It is important that your references be systematically, consistently, and properly cited, so that researchers and historians who read what you write may check on your accuracy. A very useful manual for writers of essays—one that contains considerable material on the proper forms for documentation—is that of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Dissertations*, The University of Chicago Press, 5750 Ellis Avenue, Chicago 37, Illinois. This essay is an abstract,

for the most part, of the larger *Manual of Style*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago (latest edition). The Chicago manual is highly recommended. It is a standard work in all matters of punctuation, printing style, and preparation of copy, and contains many valuable hints for authors and editors.

Even after you have collected all your material and have read the instructions on how to write history, you are still not ready. There is one more important step to take. No one should write on an American Jewish community until he has some background in general American history and in general Jewish history. For instance, it is important to know and understand the European background from which so many Jews have come. Why did Jews—like other immigrants—sail for these shores in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Most of these questions can find their answers in any good one-volume or two-volume history of Europe and the modern world. A good one-volume history is that of R.R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Among other standard works are the one-volume history by J. Salwyn Schapiro, *Modern and Contemporary European History*, and the two-volume work of Carlton J. H. Hays: *Modern Europe to 1870* and *Contemporary Europe Since 1870*. Do not fail to examine the latest editions of these works and of the following books cited.

After having worked through a history of Europe, turn next to the American scene. Get any good one-volume or two-volume college textbook on general American history. Among the college textbooks which are useful are the following: Homer Carey Hockett, *Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492-1865*, The Macmillan Company, New York; Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1865-1940*, The Macmillan Company, New York; Harold Underwood Faulkner, *American Political and Social History*, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York; Merle Curti, Richard H. Shyrock, Thomas C. Cochran, and Fred Harvey Harrington,

*An American History*, two volumes, Harper and Brothers, New York; Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, two volumes, The Macmillan Company, New York; and the supplementary two volumes, *America in Midpassage*, The Macmillan Company, New York. Now that you have familiarized yourself with the European and the American background, the next step is to read a history of American Jewry. Unfortunately, no adequate book on this subject has yet been published. The best-rounded work is that of Lee J. Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York. Students of the American Jewish scene will also find Anita L. Lebeson's *Pilgrim People*, published by Harper and Brothers, New York, very stimulating.

You are now ready to prepare an outline of your proposed history. Since you are, at this point, familiar with the material, you ought not to have too much difficulty in arranging your notes according to your concept of how the community developed since the earliest days.

If you need some help in organizing the chapters of your prospective book, you may study the tables of contents of the following histories of American Jewish communities: Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, *The Jews of Charleston*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia; Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Consider the Years*, Centennial Committee of Temple Brith Sholom, Easton, Pennsylvania, 1944. Look at the tables of contents, read a chapter here and there, and try to adapt the forms of organization of these works to your needs, if at all possible.

If you are still in doubt about the manner in which you should organize your notes, examine the following outline, which may be helpful to you:

# THE HISTORY OF OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY

## A SUGGESTED OUTLINE

### The Early Days of the General (Non-Jewish) Community

- The Early Days of Your Town
- The Coming of the First Jew or Jews
  - Where they came from
  - Why they came to this town
  - What they did for a living
  - Description of the outstanding personalities and their achievements as Jews and citizens
- ❖ The Beginnings of Organized Jewish Life
  - The First Jewish Organization in Town
    - Religious Life
      - Cemeteries, synagogues, and the like
      - The rise of Reform Judaism
    - Educational Life
      - Beginnings of religious instruction and religious schools
      - Jewish “parochial” schools in the nineteenth century
      - The Jewish press and Jewish literary production
- ❖ How the Jews Made a Living
  - Farmers, Craftsmen, Men in the Professions
  - Peddlers and Storekeepers
  - Large-scale Merchandisers and Manufacturers
- ❖ Philanthropies
  - Congregational Help to Fellow-Jews
  - Community-wide, Jewish Non-Congregational Sick-care, Burial, and Mutual-aid Societies (*hebrot*)
- ❖ Social Life of the Older Settlers
  - Social Life in Jewish Religious and Philanthropic Organizations
  - Jewish Social Clubs
  - Jewish Fraternities and Lodges; B’nai B’rith, and the like

- ❖ The Jews in the Larger (Non-Jewish) Community
  - The Jews in the Political Life of the General Community  
Officeholding, civic honors
  - The Jews as Furtherers of the Interests of the Community
  - The Jews in the Armed Forces
  - The Process of Acculturation
    - Assimilation: intermarriage, conversion, etc.
    - Americanization
    - Rejection (anti-Semitism) and acceptance of the Jews by the Gentile community
  
- ❖ The Coming of the East European Jews  
(copy the pattern of the above chapters as far as possible)
  - Where They Came From
  - Why They Came to This Town
  - What They Did for a Living
  - The Outstanding Personalities among Them  
(Describe these leaders in detail)
    - Interesting stories of the experiences of these immigrants
  
- ❖ Organized Life among the East European Immigrants
  - Acceptance and Rejection by the Older (“German”) Jewish Settlers
  - Beginnings of Specific East European Jewish Organizations
  - Religious Life: Cemeteries, Synagogues, Kosher Food Problems, etc.
    - Religious Societies (hebrut)
    - The rise of Conservative Judaism
    - The resurgence of Orthodoxy
  - Educational Life: the Heder, the Talmud Torah
    - The Yiddish language and the Yiddish press
  
- ❖ How They Made a Living
  - Peddlers, Storekeepers, Men in the Professions, etc.
  - Proletarian Workers in Shops and Factories
  - Strikes by Jewish Workers, Trade-unions, etc

- ❖ Philanthropies
  - Societies for Mutual-aid, Free Loans, Shelter Homes, Care of the Poor, Sick, Orphans, Aged
- ❖ Social and Recreational and Club Life
  - Clubs, Balls, Landsmannschaften, Workmen's Circle, etc.
- ❖ Process of Amalgamation of the Older ("German") Settlers and the East Europeans into One Community after World War I
  - The Increasing Financial Success of the East Europeans
  - Social Acceptance of Native Second-Generation Americans of East European Origin
  - Drift to the Reform Synagogues
  - Intra-marriage of the Different Jewish Groups
  - Assimilation also of the German Jewish Newcomers of the Hitlerian Period
  - Opening of the Fashionable Jewish Clubs to Jewish "Outsiders"
  - Unity through Common Philanthropic Tasks
    - Federating all the Jewish charities in town
    - Support by all groups of the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal, the Jewish Welfare Funds, etc.
    - Common support of divergent national and overseas causes and institutions
    - Common support of the Jewish school system
      - Bureaus of Jewish Education
  - The Jewish Press and Its Influence in Uniting all Local Jews
  - Acceptability of Zionism after the Balfour Declaration (1917)
  - Rise of the Jewish Community Council
  - Community Relations Committees
- ❖ The Jews in the Present-Day Larger (Non-Jewish) Community
  - Jews in Political Life
  - Jewish Participation in the Culture of the City
    - Support of the fine arts
  - Jewish Participation in the Economic Life of the Community

- Jewish Participation in the Social Life
    - Acceptance and rejection
  - Interfaith Activities
  - Outstanding Present-Day Personalities
- ❖ Summary
- A Brief Summary of the Jewish Community and Its Achievements since the First Jew Came to Town

**Appendices.** You may have material that does not fit into your scheme. If such material is useful or important, do not force it into the body of the book. Put it into appendices. The following are examples of materials that may be appended to your book:

- ✓ Chronology of important events in the general and in the Jewish community.
- ✓ Jewish population statistics.
- ✓ Lists of early settlers and their occupations.
- ✓ Lists of honors achieved by individuals in the general and in the Jewish community, locally and nationally.
- ✓ Lists of rabbis and synagogal leaders.
- ✓ Lists of men who served in the Armed Forces, including special citations for valor.
- ✓ Lists of important institutions: when organized, chartered, or dedicated.

**Index.** A book will lose a great deal of its usefulness if it does not have an index. *The Manual of Style* will tell you how to make a simple index that will serve your purpose.

**The Historical Approach.** Here are a few hints that should be helpful to you when you sit down to write:

When you think about your material, ask yourself: What happened, when, how did it happen, why did it happen, and with what effect?

Show what happened in the past and what changes have taken place now.

Try always to stick to the chronological development. It is the easiest approach for a beginner. Try to date all important events, institutions, and personalities.

Write clearly, coherently, simply. Use short sentences. Do not wander all over the lot going from one subject to another.

Go from the unimportant to the important. emphasize the important.

Build each chapter or section of a chapter around a central theme, if at all possible.

Be absolutely sure of your facts. If in doubt, express your doubt. If you are guessing, say so.

Your conclusions must be logical, reasonable, and proved. Every important statement must be supported by a documented reference. This reference must be detailed, complete, and understandable.

Above all—and we wish to repeat and emphasize this—do not be discouraged as you start to write. Do not let the mass of material that you have accumulated frighten you. Stick to your outline, and the pieces will fit into place.

Constantly bear in mind that what you are doing can be of real worth, not only to local historiography, but also to those who may one day write the history of the Jewish community of your state. Your essay or book can even become an important stone in building the story of the Jew in this land. The material in your essay may well be used by some historians of American Jewry, and their conclusions, in turn, may be drawn on by the general historians of the United States. The latter often incorporate into their writings materials dealing with the various religious and ethnic and racial elements, for all these groups together make up the American people. Thus your work can become part of the main stream of American history. When you are writing, you are writing not only for yourself and

your generation, but also for posterity, for the American people. Therefore, it behooves you to be industrious, critical, and courageous. Good luck!