



The Jews of New England

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- First Jews in New England were of Sephardic descent.
 - The colonial period for New England Jewry was highlighted by the establishment of a Jewish community in Newport, Rhode Island.
 - Jewish settlement in Colonial New England was limited and transient in other areas, although notable exceptions in Boston include Solomon Franco, Moses Michael Hays, and the Touros (also of RI). In Connecticut, the Pinto brother
- Ashkenazi immigrants began arriving in the mid-19th century.
 - German and Polish Jews first began arriving around the 1830s-1840s, primarily settling in Boston, Hartford, New Haven.
 - An influx from Eastern Europe who left due to increased anti-Semitic persecution and financial hardship for a better life began around the 1880s.
 - HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) Boston assisted immigrants with navigating their new lives. “Immigration Records, 1904-1929” is a database accessible through the New England Historic Genealogical Society.
- Massachusetts
 - In 1821, Massachusetts granted full citizenship rights to its religious minorities, which included Jews.
 - German Jews first settled in Boston in the early 1840s, primarily concentrating in the South End.
 - They established the city’s first synagogue, Congregation Ohabei Shalom, and burial grounds.
 - Tension among “German” versus “Polish” members resulted in the congregation’s split with the Polish contingent keeping the name and building, and the German group founding Adath Israel, today’s Temple Israel of Boston.
 - Between 1880-1914, more the 90,000 Jews, primarily from Eastern Europe, noted Massachusetts as their final destination upon immigration.
 - As German Jews began to move to wealthier areas, new immigrants settled in the South End. Eastern European Jews also settled in the North and West Ends, with the latter having as many as 40,000 Jews around 1910. Outside Boston, Chelsea was known as the “Jerusalem of America.”
 - As Jews became more settled and successful, they began to move north, south, and west to the suburbs.
 - Jewish settlement also occurred in Western Massachusetts, with populations in Pittsfield, Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester.
 - Several notable individuals and institutions were from Massachusetts, including Louis Brandeis (and the university that is his namesake), the Filene

- family, Leonard Nimoy, Sumner Redstone, Sheldon Adelson.
 - Today, Jews comprise about 4% of the Commonwealth's population.
- Connecticut
 - Like Massachusetts, German Jews were the first wave of immigrants beginning in the 1830s, followed by an influx of Eastern European Jews.
 - Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury housed major Jewish population centers.
 - Through the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (later Jewish Agricultural Society—JAS), Jewish farmers settled in rural Connecticut towns like Colchester, Lebanon, and Norwich. By 1928, JAS estimated 1,000 Jewish farms and 5,000 Jewish farm families lived in Connecticut.
 - Important individuals and institutions include G. Fox, Annie Leibovitz, Joe Lieberman
 - Today, Connecticut Jews comprises over 3% of the state's population.
- Rhode Island
 - After Newport diminished in importance as an economic center, Providence became the hub of Jewish life with an influx of Ashkenazi immigrants.
 - 1,600 settled in the Providence area by 1900.
 - Many settled in the North End and South Providence.
 - Many worked in jewelry factories, while others were self-employed as peddlers, tailors, shopkeepers, grocers, and shoemakers.
 - Growth reached 30,000 by 1937, and in the 1960's, Greater Providence had almost 20,000.
 - Today, approximately 18,500 Jews reside in Rhode Island.
- New Hampshire
 - The first state constitution, ratified in 1784, did not allow Jews (or any non-Protestants) to hold elected office until 1877. Restricted Jew-free hotels persisted in New Hampshire's White Mountains until the mid-20th century.
 - Jews were active in economic life in Manchester, Nashua, Dover, Portsmouth, Keene, and Claremont. Professional people, such as attorneys, doctors, dentists, teachers began to appear, often the first generation born in the United States.
 - Popular New Hampshire Jewish natives include Adam Sandler and Sarah Silverman.
 - Only about 10,000 Jews live in New Hampshire today, mostly located in Manchester, Concord, Nashua, Portsmouth, and the seacoast.
- Maine
 - Earliest known Jew in Maine was Susman Abrams in 1785.
 - German Jews established Congregation Ahawas Achim and its own cemetery (now known as the Webster Ave cemetery) in 1849, but community ultimately disappeared with the downturn in the lumber industry in 1856.
 - Bangor, Portland, Rockland, Lewiston, Biddeford, Calais, and Aroostook County were major Jewish areas of settlement.
 - In 1930, there were about 5,500 Jewish Mainers.
 - Jewish immigrants often began as peddlers, junk collectors, forest, and poultry industry. Peddlers soon bought stores in town and settled down to

- raise families.
- Current Jewish population of Maine around 20,000.
- Vermont
 - Jewish peddlers from New York and Boston first came to Vermont selling goods to quarry workers around Rutland.
 - Lithuanian Jews came to Burlington in the 1880s, forming a community referred to as Little Jerusalem.
 - Important Jewish figures and institutions: Bernie Sanders, Ben & Jerry's.
 - About 6,000 Jewish Vermonters today.

Repositories and Genealogical Societies for New England Jewish Research

Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at NEHGS / jewishheritagecenter.org

Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts / www.jcam.org

New England Jewish History Collaborative / www.nejhc.org

New England Holocaust Memorial / www.nehm.org

Documenting Maine Jewry / www.mainejews.org

Maine Jewish Museum / www.mainejewishmuseum.org

Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston / www.jgsgb.org

The Vilna Shul / www.vilnashul.org

Western Massachusetts Jewish Genealogical Society / www.wmjgs.org

Jewish Historical Society of Western Massachusetts / www.jhswm.org

Yiddish Book Center / www.yiddishbookcenter.org

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association / www.rijha.org

Rhode Island Jewish Museum / www.rhodeislandjewishmuseum.org

Touro Synagogue / www.tourosynagogue.org

Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut / www.jgsct.org

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford / www.jhsg.org

Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven / www.jewishhistorynh.org

Vermont Jewry/Lost Mural Project / www.lostmural.org

Jewish Federation of New Hampshire / www.jewishnh.org

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Selected Jewish New England Newspapers

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Boston Jewish Chronicle (Greater Boston: 1890-1893)

Jewish Times (Boston: 1945-2001)

Idisher Fihrer Boston (Yiddish) (1913-1926)

Jewish Weekly Times (Western Massachusetts: 1945-1997)

Jewish Journal (North Shore: 1950-Present)

Connecticut Jewish Ledger (1929-Present)

Jewish Rhode Island (Originally *Jewish Herald* and *Rhode Island Herald*: 1929-Present)