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ABSTRACT

THE ASSIMILATION OF AN ETHNIC GROUP - THE GERMAN-JEWISH PEDDLERS IN THE UPPER OHIO VALLEY, 1790-1840: A STUDY IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

By

Richard Warren Welch

The Jews in the United States have been characterized in most literature as being primarily urban dwellers. This thesis analyzes the German-Jewish immigrants of the period 1790-1840, most of whom had been residents of rural areas, small towns and villages in the southern German states of Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden. The migration of Jews during the study period was one of single, young men, traveling individually rather than in family groups. The characteristics of the migration, together with the conditions of Jews in Germany and the isolated frontier condition into which the immigrant German-Jew was thrust, made assimilation into the Christian-dominated culture virtually inevitable. Assimilation of the German-Jewish migrant began in the reform movements which were sweeping Europe during the Napoleonic era, was nurtured by the conditions encountered by the migrant during his voyage to the United States, and became complete as he peddled on the American frontier and settled in a frontier town or village.

The methodology of historical geography is utilized to examine the characteristics and magnitude of the German-Jewish migration as it occurred during the study period; to examine the way of life of the

German-Jew as he peddled across the American frontier; and to analyze the processes involved in his assimilation into an alien culture. The theme, geographic change through time, is the basic tenet of historical geography. This study analyzes the geographic change in the culture of the German-Jews as they migrated from southern Germany to the Upper Ohio Valley during a given fifty year time period.

The findings confirm that the German-Jewish migration of the study period was, indeed, proportionately large; the vast majority of the immigrants taking up peddling as their initial occupation upon arrival. The social conditions of the Jews in Germany, plus their experiences while migrating and while peddling, are shown to have had a direct and forceful impact on their Jewish religion and culture. This impact led to their rapid and complete assimilation into the Christian-dominated culture of the Upper Ohio Valley region.

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A STUDY IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Geography

1972

G 80345

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals gave of their time and effort in assisting in the preparation of this thesis. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

Special thanks are due my advisor and committee chairman, Dr. Daniel Jacobson, for his expert assistance and encouragement. I am grateful to the staff of the American Jewish Archives, on the campus of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, for their extra effort in providing material relating to German-Jewish peddlers in the United States; and to Mr. Willard Heiss of Indianapolis, Indiana for his valuable aid in providing publicity regarding the subject of this thesis, thereby bringing to light information which otherwise would have remained unknown.

I wish also to express my appreciation to Mrs. Josef Bental for her translation from Classical Hebrew into English of articles from the periodicals, Hamagid and Hazefirah, and to Mrs. Erika Nwankwo and Mr. Milos Taborsky for their translation from German into English of articles from Deborah.

This thesis is dedicated to the descendants of the hundreds of unknown German-Jewish peddlers who, in their desire to achieve a better life for themselves and their posterity, emigrated from their homeland and added an exciting chapter to our American heritage. It is the hope of this writer that this thesis will aid the descendants in their quest for knowledge of their Jewish heritage.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Methodological Considerations

Historical geography has been frequently criticized in the past for its lack of vitality. As Johnson states, it does not appear to possess an extra-disciplinary purpose; it has contributed little to an over-all understanding of man and his social relations.¹ Historical geography, by definition, concerns itself with the past origins and processes of cultural phenomena in an attempt to account for the rise and loss of institutions and civilizations.² Sauer gives historical geographers an unlimited field of study when he says, "one is no less a geographer if he is engaged in knowing the rise and passing of a culture . . . Any topic in the social sciences is important, . . . by the light it throws on the nature of culture origins and changes."³ Clark further defines historical geography as "any study of past geography or geographic change through time . . . , whether the study be involved with cultural, physical,

¹Alan H. Johnson, "The Role of Historical Geography in Culture Change Analysis," (unpublished essay, Fresno State College, n.d.), p. 1.

²Carl Ortwin Sauer, "Foreword to Historical Geography," Annals, Association of American Geographers, XXXI (1941), p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 13.

From: Welch, Richard Warren: The Assimilation of an ethnic group - a study in historical geography
M.A. thesis, Department of Geography
1 MSU: 1972

or biotic phenomena and however limited it may be in topic of area."⁴ Clark continues by terming historical geography "the processes by which . . . things have changed . . . , [or] geographic change through time."⁵ The geographer, according to Clark, through the methodological process called historical geography, examines past culture changes in an attempt to see how they worked.⁶ Understanding the processes of past culture change may help provide some of the answers concerning culture contact and change in the contemporary world. Hartshorne gives a definition for historical geography that is slightly more generalized than the preceding. He says ". . . historical geography is to be considered simply as the geography of past periods."⁷

Broek, in his description of the discipline, outlines three approaches to historical geography.⁸ The first is the study which deals essentially with the present character of places; relying on the past only when it is needed to explain the present. The second approach is the process-oriented geographical analysis, the attempt to understand the ever changing interplay of forces acting through time. The third is a sequent occupance, or cross sections through time approach, which, as Broek

⁴Andrew H. Clark, et al, "Historical Geography," in American Geography: Inventory and Prospect, ed. by Preston E. James and Clarence F. Jones (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1954), p. 71.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 96.

⁷Richard Hartshorne, "Historical Geography," in The Nature of Geography (Lancaster, Pa: Association of American Geographers, 1939), p. 185.

⁸Jan O.M. Broek, Geography, its Scope and Spirit (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1965), p. 27.

identifies it, presents "a sequent series of 'stills',"⁹ presented at various times in the past.

Newcomb describes what he terms the twelve working approaches to historical geography.¹⁰ Six of the approaches are described as being traditional in nature. The remaining six are termed "new departure modes."¹¹ Because of the specialized nature of the latter, none of which apply to the theme of this study, they will not be discussed at length here.¹² The six traditional approaches, however, are relevant and may well be applied to a study of this nature. The six traditional approaches in historical geography may be described as follows: 1) The cross-sectional approach in which a past period is isolated and described in a manner similar to that of a contemporary regional study. The cultural or physical landscape, selected because of its importance or because abundant source materials exist, is described in detail. 2) The vertical, or origin and evolution theme, narrows the selection of topics to one or more themes, depicting them through a base of flowing

⁹Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰Robert M. Newcomb, "Twelve Working Approaches to Historical Geography," Association of Pacific Coast Geographers Yearbook, 31 (1969), pp. 27-50.

¹¹Ibid., p. 34.

¹²Briefly, the new departure modes are: 1) Man's role as an agent of landscape change, or man's impact upon the land; 2) Areal differentiation of remnants of the historic past, or the study of relicts of the past which fulfill different roles in the contemporary world; 3) Genre de Vie, or the study of the imprint made upon the inhabitants of a region by an exploited natural environment or by an altered environment; 4) The theoretical model, or simplification through schematization to achieve generalizations; 5) Pragmatic preservation of landscape legacies, or the isolation and description of past landscape features which are still in existence and exploitable as scenery or tourist attractions; 6) Past perceptual lenses, or the study of a past environment as described in the writings of its occupants.

time. This method is particularly well-suited when the entire landscape cannot be examined because of its long history or because it contains a multitude of elements, or themes, which demand examination. Process, or change through time, is an important ingredient of this approach. 3) The third theme is a union of the cross-sectional and vertical approaches. It has as its goal the blend of the landscape description with discussions of the mechanisms of change. The ultimate goal is to build a structure which will more dynamically depict the growth and change of a landscape. 4) The retrogressive approach, or the looking-over-the-shoulder into the past technique, begins with the present; it delves into the past only so far and as often as necessary to properly examine and explain the contemporary scene. 5) Culture history, closely akin to the vertical theme, treats the origins, dispersals, innovations, and alterations of various cultural traits within a region. The study area may consist of a small region, rich in a variety of culture traits, or it may be the study of the movement of one or more traits across a number of regions. This approach is strongly based in anthropology and emphasizes study of pre-literate and pre-contact societies. 6) The historical regional geography, closely allied to historical research, demands a thorough knowledge of historiography. It is an approach which endeavors to depict the historical development of a region either at a particular time in the past or through time to the present.¹³

The approach to be utilized in this study is the origin and evolution, or the vertical theme, in historical geography.¹⁴ From its very

¹³Newcomb, op. cit., pp. 30-34.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 30-31.

definition and description, "the depiction of a theme within a base of flowing time,"¹⁵ it is the logical approach, or theme, to be applied to the subject of this study. Historical geography, as defined earlier, it concerned with the changing spatial relationships between man and his environment,¹⁶ or culture change. This study will depict culture change, the theme, through a base of flowing time, the fifty year period from 1790 to 1840.

Geographers have long been interested in ethnic minorities in the United States, though rarely in a historical context. Normally the only occurrence of a time factor in ethno-geographic studies has been through the study of ethnic population distribution, ghetto emergence, or distributional changes through time; all within an urban environment.¹⁷ In the case of the American Indian, the concentration has been primarily on the pre-European spatial distributions of the group.¹⁸ Ethnic studies which analyze the initial contribution of the group to the American culture, of the effect and influence of the American culture on the immigrating ethnic group, are becoming increasingly important to the

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶The term environment may apply to either the physical landscape or the cultural landscape of a region. For the purposes of this study, the term environment will refer only to the cultural environment, or landscape.

¹⁷David Ward, "The Emergence of Central Immigration Ghettos in American Cities: 1840-1920," Annals, Association of American Geographers, 58 (1968), pp. 343-59.

¹⁸See, however, Daniel Jacobson, "The Origin of the Koasati Community of Louisiana," Ethnohistory, Spring, 1960, pp. 97-120 and the following unpublished Ph.D. dissertations: Henry Coppock, "Interactions between Russians and Native Americans in Alaska, 1741-1840," Michigan State University, 1970; John W. Stafford, "Crow Culture Change: A Geographical Analysis," Michigan State University, 1971; and John R. Henderson, "Haida Culture Change: A Geographical Analysis," Michigan State University, 1972.

social sciences, including geography.¹⁹

Anthropologists have long recognized the value of ethnic studies, particularly in acculturation.²⁰ Sociologists, although concerned primarily with more modern, rather than historical, ethnic minorities in the Third World, have developed a related concept: assimilation.²¹ The discipline of geography, particularly through the methodology termed historical geography, is also concerned with these two concepts: acculturation and assimilation. By definition, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changing in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."²² Geography, as stated earlier in this chapter, is concerned with culture change. The process termed culture change may be brought about either by independent evolution, or internally induced change, or by contact

¹⁹Two recent works which deal with this subject are Carl O. Sauer, Sixteenth Century America (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1971); and Daniel Jacobson, Great Indian Tribes (Maplewood, N.J: Hammond, 1970).

²⁰The discipline of anthropology is especially important to human geographers. Carl O. Sauer, in his presidential address before the Association of American Geographers in December, 1940, reprinted in "Foreword to Historical Geography," Annals, Association of American Geographers, XXXI (1941), pp. 1-24, urges human geographers to make full use of the sister discipline of anthropology.

²¹John A. Jakle and James O. Wheeler, "The Changing Residential Structure of the Dutch Population in Kalamazoo, Michigan," Annals, Association of American Geographers, 59 (1969), p. 441; Edward Ackerman, et al, "Cultural Geography," in Introduction to Geography: Selected Readings, ed. by Fred E. Dohrs and Lawrence M. Summers (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), p. 343.

²²Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovits, "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation," American Anthropologist, 38 (1936), p. 149.

between two different cultures, or externally induced change, or acculturation. It is important that the type of contact between the culture groups be clearly stated.²³ The culture contact between the German-Jewish peddlers and Gentile settlers in the Upper Ohio Valley during the period of this study was, as Redfield analyzes, "between an entire population and selected groups from another population, e.g., . . . immigrant males."²⁴ The face to face contact between Gentiles and Jews, at a ratio in the neighborhood of one-hundred to one, brought about an almost immediate change in the Jewish culture. It was culture change, or, more specifically, assimilation, par excellence.²⁵

General works concerning the frontier settlement in the United States rarely mention the Jew.²⁶ The interaction of Christians and Jews on the Trans-Appalachian frontier is particularly ignored in both Jewish and non-Jewish literature.²⁷ Rabbi David Philipson states that the Jews who

²³For a full explanation of the various types of culture contacts resulting in acculturation, see Redfield, et al, "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation," p. 150.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Assimilation, by definition, is a form of acculturation whereby a group wholly replaces its original culture with another. For further review of the concept of assimilation see Jakle and Wheeler, op. cit., p. 441; Leonard Broom and John I. Kitsuse, "The Validation of Acculturation: A Condition to Ethnic Assimilation," American Anthropologist, 57 (1955), pp. 44-48; and Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

²⁶An example of this neglect is Thomas D. Clark's detailed history of the frontier movement in the United States, Frontier America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), in which there is no mention of the Jewish role in America's frontier experience.

²⁷Jewish literature which deals with the frontier period of American history is concerned almost exclusively with the Jews and Jewish Congregations in urbanized areas, rarely with isolated Jews in rural areas.

had left the faith had "no place in an account of the early Jewish settlement in Cincinnati, or, indeed, of Ohio."²⁸ Dembits offers the same opinion: "I might have named a number of Jews . . . who, between 1820 and 1840, came here, . . . intermarried with the best Gentile families, and thus became lost to their race; but it is no part of my duty to tell their story."²⁹

Studies of the cultural and spatial characteristics of an ethnic group from a historical-geographic viewpoint are beneficial to all social science fields.³⁰ The addition of the spatial dimension to the study gives the scholar a concrete locational framework in which to visualize the interrelationships between culture groups. Ethno-geographic studies, utilizing the methodology of historical geography, not only will account for the rise and loss of cultures, or culture change, but will also introduce an element which will add life, or vitality, to historical geography, namely, the individual.

Statement of Problem

From the earliest days of European occupation of the Upper Ohio Valley, Jews have been present in ever-increasing numbers. Southern Germany contributed by far the largest number of Jews who entered the area. However, studies concerning the settlement of the Upper Ohio Valley fail

²⁸David Philipson, The Oldest Jewish Congregation in the West (Cincinnati: The Press of C.J. Krehbiel and Company, 1894), p. 8.

²⁹Lewis N. Dembits, "Jewish Beginnings in Kentucky," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, I (1893), p. 101.

³⁰Jakle and Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 441-60.

to analyze the significance of the German-Jewish element in the population, or, as frequently has been the case, to even acknowledge its existence. It is the purpose of this study to analyze the number, characteristics, cultural interrelationships, and assimilation of the German-Jews in the Upper Ohio Valley during the period 1790-1840. This study will also attempt to show that the popularly held opinion regarding the Jews as being primarily urban dwellers is incorrect; for fifty years, 1790-1840, German-Jews in the United States settled principally in rural areas.

The objective of this study will be to prove or disprove the hypothesis that the Jewish culture is unsuitable to a migration of individuals, rather than groups, such as occurred during the study period, and that the Jewish culture is not compatible to a life as existed on the American frontier. The isolated frontier condition into which the German-Jewish immigrant was thrust made his eventual assimilation into the Gentile culture inevitable.

Regional and Temporal Considerations

Broek writes that "there is . . . a methodological problem on which there is constant strife among geographers, namely, that regarding the delimitation of regions."³¹ The region may be defined strictly on physical characteristics, or may be determined by cultural characteristics. The delimitation of the region under consideration in this study is based principally on cultural characteristics - the primary area of concentration of German-Jewish peddlers on the Trans-Appalachian frontier.

~~The region to be analyzed in this study is -----~~
The opening of the Ohio Valley to settlement coincided with the period

³¹Jan O.M. Broek, "The Relations between History and Geography," The Pacific Historical Review, X (1941), p. 323.

of great upheaval in the European, particularly South German, Jewish community. Anti-semitism was rampant in the South German states of Baden, Bavaria and Württemberg during the time period chosen for this study. Hundreds of young Jewish men began emigrating to the United States after the turn of the century, but, for reasons to be discussed later, were not accepted in the Sephardic communities of the Eastern Seaboard.³² Instead, they followed the general movement of settlement westward into the Trans-Appalachian area, first occupying themselves as peddlers, later settling among the people they had come to know while peddling. They settled throughout the entire Trans-Appalachian area, from New Orleans to Michilimackinac, westward to the Great Plains. The emphasis of this study, however, will be focused on a portion of the Trans-Appalachian area which was chosen because; 1) It is located within the primary area of concentration of German, both Gentile and Jewish, settlement during the time period 1790-1840, and; 2) The cultural interaction between Jew and Gentile in the rural areas of this region typifies that which occurred throughout the entire Trans-Appalachian area.

The region to be analyzed in this study is termed the Upper Ohio Valley, although it includes the valleys of numerous tributary streams

³²The Sephardic Jews of the Atlantic coastal cities were descendants of Portuguese and Spanish Jews who were driven from their homeland by the Inquisition. The first Sephardic Jews to arrive in North America landed at New Amsterdam (New York) in September, 1654. The first group of twenty-three Jews had sailed from Recife, others later came from other areas of South America, or directly from southern Europe. Sephardic Jews were in relatively large numbers in the United States by 1790, particularly in Newport, Rhode Island, New York, Charleston, and Savannah, Georgia. The Sephardim were Orthodox Jews; the German-Jews, or Ashkenazim, were, during the time of this study, Reform Jews. For further on the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in Europe, see Abba Eban, My People; The Story of the Jews (New York: Behrman House, 1968).

as well.³³ The Ohio River was unquestionably the primary avenue of transit for settlers and merchandise into the interior of the United States during the fifty year period of this study. Commerce moved freely along the entire course of the Ohio, from Pittsburgh to its junction with the Mississippi, with the exception of the falls at Louisville. Cramer points out that most of the larger tributary streams were navigable for a distance, on the average, of about seventy miles (102 km.) from the Ohio River.³⁴ Settlers understandably would follow the routes of least resistance into new territory, so the navigable tributaries of the Ohio River would have been the logical choices for entry into the territory on either side of that artery. As will be discussed in Chapter IV, the majority of the settlements were, particularly before 1820, located either on the banks of the navigable portions of the tributaries of the Ohio River, or on the Ohio itself. Peddlers, also, would logically locate themselves where the markets were located. "The Shylocks," complains Luke Shortfield, "prefer to be on the navigable streams."³⁵ Goods were less expensive when shipped direct and the peddlers could buy at lower prices, undercutting inland merchants who were few in

³³The region is shown on the map (Figure 1). It is delimited by the cities of Pittsburgh, on the east, and Cincinnati, on the west; the head of navigation of the tributary streams to the north and to the south. The head of navigation is indicated on the map by the location of the name designations of those streams.

³⁴The Muskingum River, for example, was navigable for 110 actual miles, the Hocking River for seventy actual miles. The direct distance from the Ohio River to these limits of navigation is approximately seventy miles according to Zadok Cramer, The Navigator (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear, and Eichbaum, 1814. Reprinted Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), pp. 92-95.

³⁵Luke Shortfield [John Beauchamp Jones], The Western Merchant (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot and Company, 1849), p. 183.

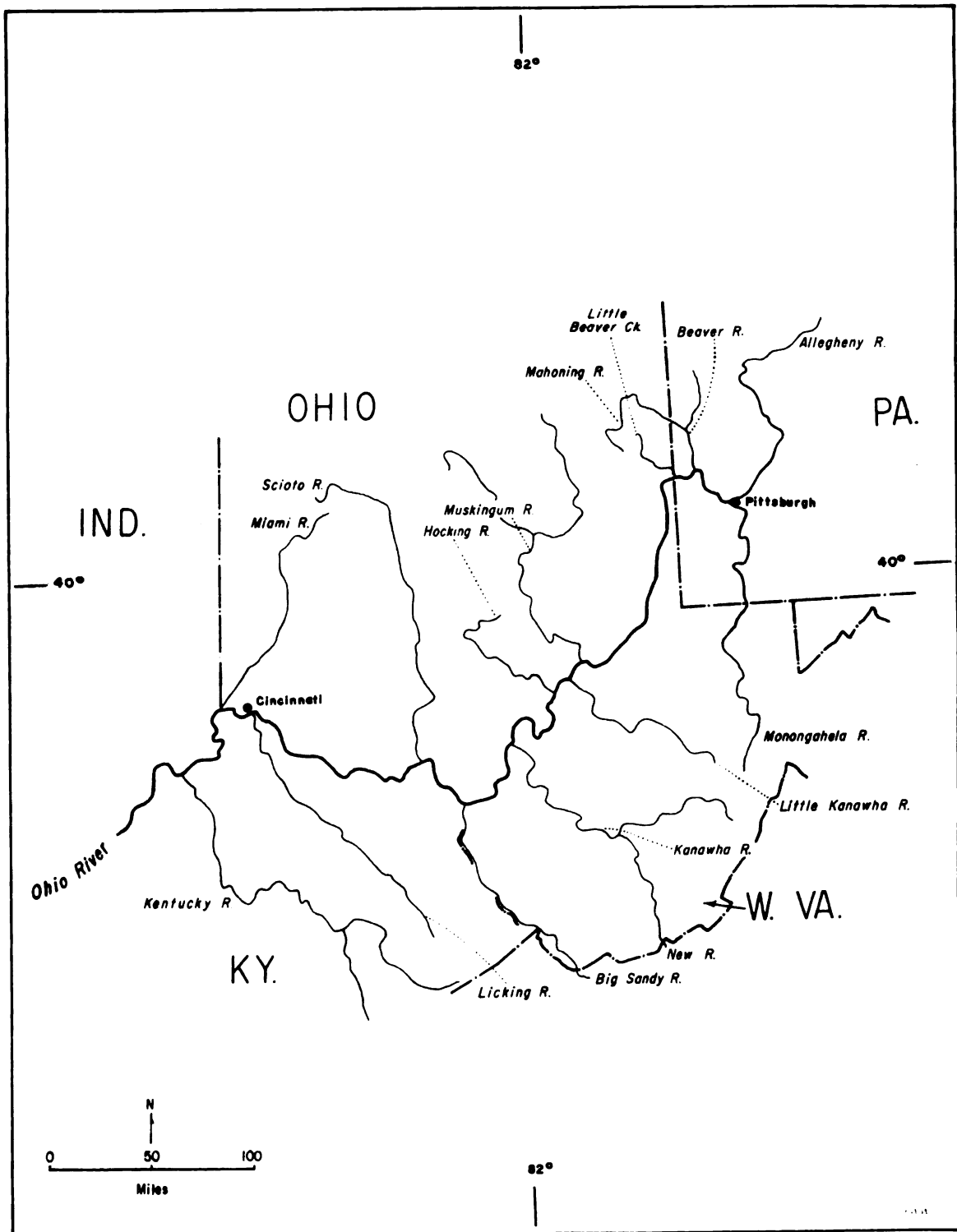


FIGURE 1.
THE UPPER OHIO VALLEY

number.³⁶ Peddlers carried their wares from the river settlements, where their suppliers were located, to the inland and upriver settlements and to the isolated farms between them. Riverboat peddlers were severely limited in the area in which they could peddle by the navigability of the stream. Foot and wagon peddlers were also limited, of course, in the distances that they were able to travel from their bases of supply. The peddler whose diary is deposited in the Western Michigan University Archives,³⁷ discussed in further detail in Chapter III, from all indications was limited by the amount of goods he was capable of transporting. His traveling distance was approximately seventy-five miles from his base of supply in Wooster, Wayne County, Ohio. In order to minimize the possibility that he would be forced to retrace any portion of his route after his supplies were sold, he did not extend himself beyond a radius of thirty miles from his supply base. He peddled from a horse-drawn wagon. Foot peddlers would, of course, have been more severely limited in distance by the smaller quantities that they could carry on their backs.

The lack of passable roads, especially during the first three decades of this study,³⁸ encouraged peddlers to follow, as did immigrant settlers, the routes of minimum difficulty, i.e., the navigable rivers. A peddler, upon reaching the farthest point of navigation, would peddle his wares

³⁶Cramer (1814) occasionally comments on the number of merchants in each village in the Ohio Valley. Many villages had no merchants, others had only a few. Point Pleasant, (West) Virginia, for example, had Mr. Langtry as its only merchant.

³⁷Peddler's diary, Western Michigan University, Archives, John Sheneman Papers. Hereafter referred to as the Sheneman peddler.

³⁸Thomas D. Clark, op. cit., pp. 339-40.

in the direction of his supply base, not away from it; returning overland in the direction of the Ohio River. If his calculations were accurate he would reach his supply base at the time his stock became depleted.

The above analysis, then, suggests a primary area of concentration of German-Jewish peddlers within a region marked by the head of navigation of the tributary streams of the Ohio River, within a convenient peddling distance of a supply base. For the purpose of this study, the territory within seventy miles of the Ohio River will be the region under consideration; from Pittsburgh, the source of the Ohio River, to Cincinnati, the approximate mid-point in the river's journey to its junction with the Mississippi.

This study, while primarily concerned with cultural interactions within the Upper Ohio Valley, will not, however, exclude pertinent material concerning events which occurred outside the region. Documented incidents from other areas will be included occasionally for the added insight they might provide.

The county is the basic record keeping unit in the states located within the study area; Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Indiana and Ohio. As will be discussed in Chapter III, peddlers licenses were issued by the county courts. Legal matters, such as probate and civil suits, were the responsibility of the counties as were land transactions, marriages and taxes. Therefore, the county is the obvious choice as the basic unit of study. The counties which are included within the study area may be determined by utilizing the overlay which is located in the pocket on the inside back cover. The scale of the overlay is the same as that of the base map (Figure 1).

The time period 1790-1840 is one during which the German-Jews in the

United States were particularly obscure.³⁹ The German-Jews who emigrated to the United States before 1790 were generally professional men, well-educated and financially self-sufficient. They were, for the most part, conservative in their religious outlook; they were easily absorbed into the existing Sephardic congregations of the Atlantic coastal region. The German-Jewish immigrants of the post-1790 era were, typically, poor and uneducated, escaping extreme religious persecution in Europe. They were, in their religious beliefs and practices, Reform Jews and as such were not acceptable to the conservative Sephardic congregations. The former's forefathers had for ages been subjected to degrading persecution. They had been barred from any type of vocation which would elevate their status. As a result, the Sephardim considered the Germans as being of a lower social status than themselves. Kohler points out:

For a long time prejudices against them lingered in the breast of the pure Sephardi, even until after the traits that had inspired this ungenerous feeling had ceased to exist. The question became then merely a question of caste. Many old-fashioned Portuguese at one period held themselves socially aloof from their Ashkenazi brethren, . . .⁴⁰

Nor were the German-Jewish immigrants inclined to immediately abandon their religious beliefs upon arrival in the United States by attempting to join a Sephardic congregation. They preferred instead to maintain their independence and religious identity as Reform Jews. This decision would later cost most of them their Jewish culture.

³⁹Malcolm H. Stern's discussion of the Federal Period in "Jewish Migrations," Genealogical Research, edited by Kenn Stryker-Rodda, II (Washington, D.C: American Society of Genealogists, 1971), p. 299 limits this period of American Jewish history to the years 1783-1840.

⁴⁰Max J. Kohler, "The German-Jewish Migration to America," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, IX (1901), p. 90.

The year 1840 is a logical choice as a termination date for this study because, as Hansen indicates, "Jewish emigration, far from ending with the decades of the 1840's, continued with increasing force; but in the succeeding years it was caused not so much by persecution as by the prevailing depression which weighed upon Jew and Gentile alike."⁴¹ The decade of the 1840's ushered in an era of mass migration of Germans, both Christian and Jew, into the United States on a scale that had never previously been reached.⁴² The migration of the 1840's and 1850's was of such significance and magnitude that it has drawn the interest of scholars in the United States away from earlier individual migrations.

Generally speaking, the immigrants of the later mass migration were not assimilated into the Christian dominated culture. They clustered together in the more urbanized portions of the country, thereby helping to create the present-day image of the Jew in America as an urban dweller. The purpose of this study is to focus more directly on the earlier immigrants who, for reasons to be analyzed later, were assimilated into the existing Christian culture, abandoning their Jewish culture and heritage.

Organization

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter I consists of the introduction, divided into five subdivisions; the methodological considerations, or statements concerning the methodology of historical geography

⁴¹Marcus Lee Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 140.

⁴²Rudolf Glanz, "German Jews in New York City in the Nineteenth Century," in Studies in Judaica Americana (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), p. 125.

and the methodology to be employed in this study; a statement concerning the problem to be analyzed; the considerations behind the delimitation of the regional and temporal factors; the organization of the thesis; and the background of the choice of the subject.

Chapter II will be concerned with the fact that the majority of the German-Jews who emigrated to the United States were primarily from the southern German states of Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden. The situation in those states as it related to the Jews will be examined to determine the causes for the increasing migration of Jews during the period 1790-1840. The characteristics of the migrants, as well as the magnitude of the migration will be examined. A short discussion concerning the aid given the immigrants upon arrival in the United States will follow.

Chapter III deals with the factors which determined the choice of peddling as the German-Jews' initial method of earning a livelihood in the United States. The spatial characteristics of the German-Jewish peddlers, as they migrated into and tramped through the Upper Ohio Valley, will be discussed. The life of the German-Jewish peddler will be discussed in an attempt to analyze the extent and significance of the cultural contact between Christians and Jews in the Upper Ohio Valley.

The theme of Chapter IV is to examine the spatial distribution of the German-Jews as they settled in the villages and hamlets throughout the Upper Ohio Valley in an attempt to confirm the assumption that they were situated in rural, rather than urban, areas. The assimilation of the German-Jews into the Christian community will be examined to illustrate the processes of culture change through time.

Chapter V contains the summary of the preceding four chapters, together with conclusions concerning the role of the German-Jewish peddler in the

cultural geography of the Upper Ohio Valley, the effect of their assimilation into the Christian culture on themselves and their descendants, and suggestions regarding possible future areas of study.

Choosing the Subject

The writer's interest in the German-Jewish peddlers of the early nineteenth century developed through eight years of research into his own personal ancestry.

Thousands of Americans and Canadians are descended from German-Jewish peddlers. Some families have continued to thrive in the Jewish faith; the descendants of these families are generally aware of their cultural heritage. The families of the German-Jewish peddlers who were assimilated into the Gentile culture have, of course, lost their Jewish culture; many are unaware of their Jewish heritage. The writer's family belongs to the latter.

Family traditions often bear a grain of truth. One tradition that was passed down to the writer told of a Jewish ancestry somewhere in the dim past. Not one member of the family, however, knew any of the details of our descent from our Jewish ancestor, or of his life.

Discovery of the connection between the writer and Hyman Lazarus, a German-Jewish peddler who settled in Malta, Ohio in 1818 (Figure 2), with some details of his life, led to a desire to determine if he was unique in history, or whether his story was a common one of cultural assimilation. This thesis is the result.

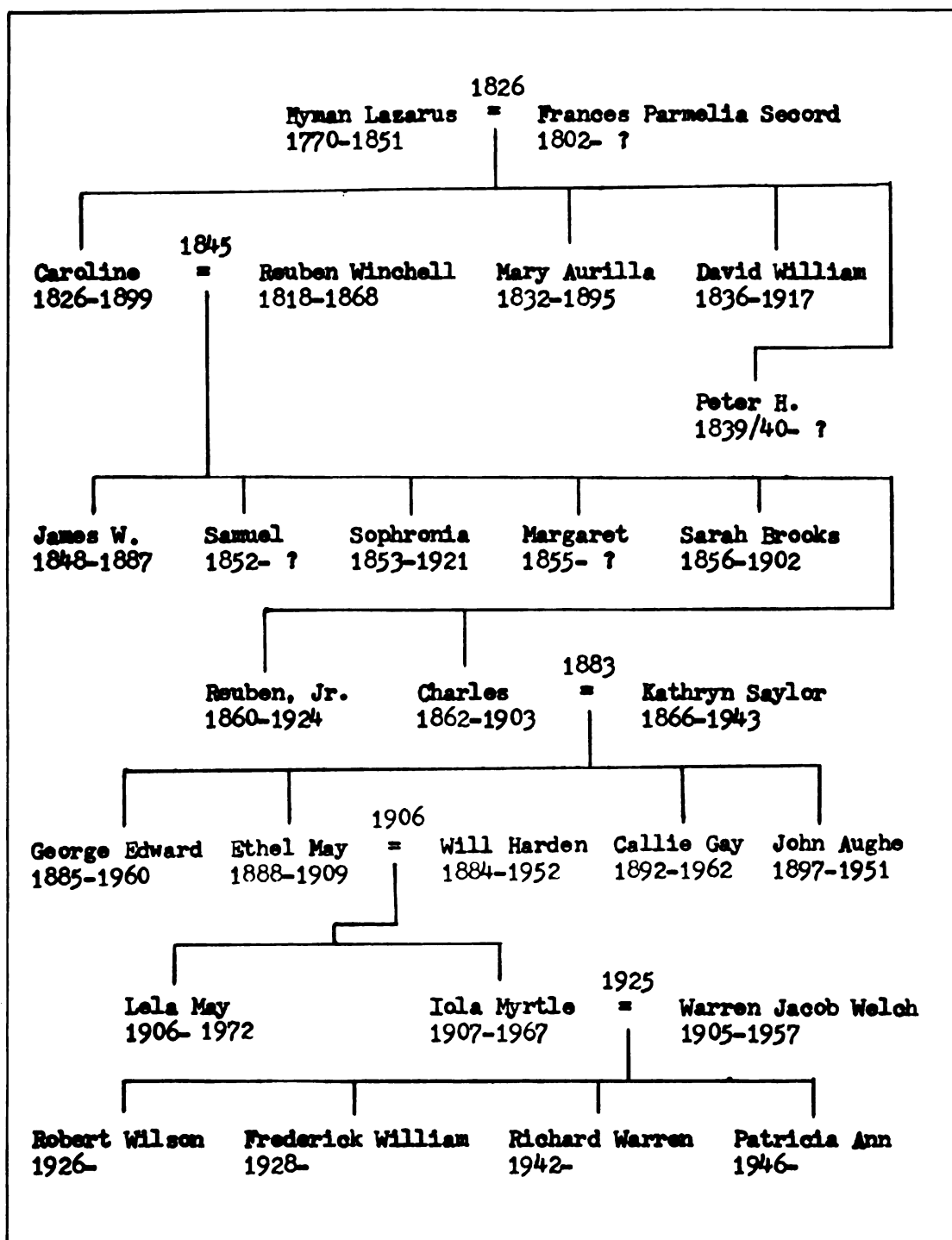


FIGURE 2.

DESCENT FROM HYMAN LAZARUS

CHAPTER II

THE ROAD TO AMERICA

Emigration from Germany

The rallying cry, "Up, and to America!"¹ took the Jewish population of Germany by storm during the later Revolutionary period in Europe. However, the Jews of the period 1790-1840 were heeding their own version of the same rallying cry. They were the forerunners of the mass migration of the 1840's; pioneers in every sense of the word.

The Jewish emigrants knew that their families and friends in Germany could be injured in their struggle for equal rights if wide publicity were given to what was to become an exodus. Few Jewish publications, in the United States or in Europe, gave detailed explanations regarding the Jewish situation in Germany, or the possible benefits that could be derived by emigrating. In addition, emigration to a new environment and culture is basically an individual decision, based on personal desires and ambitions. There were innumerable reasons for Jewish migration from Germany.

The popular notion concerning America's freedom of religion for all faiths was undoubtedly considered by Jewish emigrants, but was only one of many considerations. Hansen states that "their exodus was due less to

¹Rudolf Glanz, "Source Materials on the History of Jewish Emigration to the United States, 1800-1880," YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, VI (1951), p. 97. Hereafter referred to as "Source Materials."

their religious zeal than to a desire to escape anti-semitism."² Other matters were necessarily given higher priority.

In the absence of a titled class, the opportunities for advancement in the United States seemed endless to the persecuted and poverty stricken Jews. The fixed legal status of Jews in most of the German States³ gave them ample motive for emigrating. Official permission (Letters of Protection) was required for Jews to establish a domicile, or to work at a trade. There were strict quotas regulating the number of Jews who were to be granted such permission annually. Without a legal residence, or citizenship, a Jew could not obtain permission to marry. This was a major obstacle that many young Jewish men could not overcome. If permission was rejected, the young Jew often had no other recourse but to apply for a passport and emigrate.

Discrimination, on a governmental level at least, eased somewhat during the Napoleonic period. Under French law Jews were not only given surnames, something they were not previously required to possess under German law, but were also made citizens. Local conditions, however, continued to encourage emigration of Jews from southern Germany. Following the battle of Waterloo in May, 1814, massive emigration of Jews was

²Mansen, op. cit., p. 139.

³This was not only true in Germany, but in the Austrian Empire as well. "Der Alte Hausirer [The Old Peddler]," Deborah, 42 (May 13, 1897), p. 3 mentions the recent death of Salomon Ullmann, age 97, in Waitzen, in what is now Hungary. In 1836 he obtained a settlement permit from the bishop - Count Franz Nadasdy. Until that time Jews had not been allowed in Waitzen after night-fall; those who wished to spend the night had to buy a sufferance ticket for two Groschen. Following a severe winter night in 1836, during which the peddler vainly sought refuge in the town, he went to see the bishop. His story was so moving that the bishop abolished the settlement prohibition. Ullmann was the first Jew to permanently settle in Waitzen.

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fostered by reinstated anti-semitic laws. The Napoleonic wars had left the European economy in chaos, affecting the Jews more seriously than most other groups. Gentile Germans also resented the benefits received by Jews during the Napoleonic period, causing them to press for more restrictive laws against the Jews.

The Napoleonic wars also introduced conscription to the young Jewish men - one of the liabilities of citizenship. S. Kleeburg and Lucas Rosenstein fled Borgentreich, Westphalia in 1812 to avoid military service. They reached Antwerp where they boarded a ship bound for the United States.⁴ These instances were, however, isolated cases. Conscription was not one of the primary causes of Jewish emigration from Germany.

Hirshler states that the restrictive marriage laws of Bavaria were of "immediate concern to Jewish small town youths."⁵ The principal source of Jewish emigration was, as Hirshler states above, from the small market towns and villages of Bavaria and southwestern Germany (Württemberg and Baden). Glanz also agrees that the German-Jewish emigrants to the United States were the products of the small towns of southern Germany.⁶ Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, an ex-peddler with literary capabilities, says that the German-Jewish emigrants were "principally from Bavaria, Baden, Hechingen-Hohenzollern and other South German

⁴Floyd S. Fierman, "The Impact of the Frontier on a Jewish Family: The Bibos," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 59 (1969-70), p. 461.

⁵Eric E. Hirshler, ed., Jews from Germany in the United States (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), p. 35.

⁶Rudolf Glanz, "The 'Bayer' and the 'Pollack' in America," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 188.

States."⁷ See Figure 3 for the location of these areas.

The causes for the emigration of Jews from Germany were many and complex. The situation of the Jews in the southern German states was such that at least one Jewish periodical of the time attempted to explain, by example, why the emigration was occurring:

. . . what else should they do but seek a new fatherland, where they should exercise the profession they had learned, to show off their wares, their knowledge and their learning. A young man, capable and a professional, applied to his district court . . . in the Retzat district for a certificate of protection. It was denied him at the first tribunal as well as repeatedly at the higher ones. He made a last attempt to obtain it, but simultaneously annexed his petition to have his passport permitting him to go abroad drawn up . . . the petitioner received the latter and emigrated.⁸

The same periodical two years later (1839) complains that the "register makes it little short of impossible for young Israelites to set up housekeeping."⁹ Jews frequently reached middle age before they could receive letters of protection allowing them to establish domiciles, thereby permitting their marriage. The Jewish population in many areas of southern Germany was severely restricted. The young Jewish men, in order to obtain the desired letters of protection, frequently had to wait for one of the older residents to die before they were allowed to apply for citizenship. The only alternatives were to accept their fate and do nothing, be baptized and discard their religion and culture,¹⁰ or emigrate.

⁷ Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, The Settlement of Jews in the Lower Ohio Valley (Paducah, Ky: Temple Israel, 1912), p. 14.

⁸ Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 90 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, IX (1837), p. 264.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 92-93 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, (1839), no. 24, p. 420.

¹⁰ Ibid., op. cit., p. 265 estimates that between 1800 and 1810 one-tenth of all German-Jews were baptized to avoid further persecution.

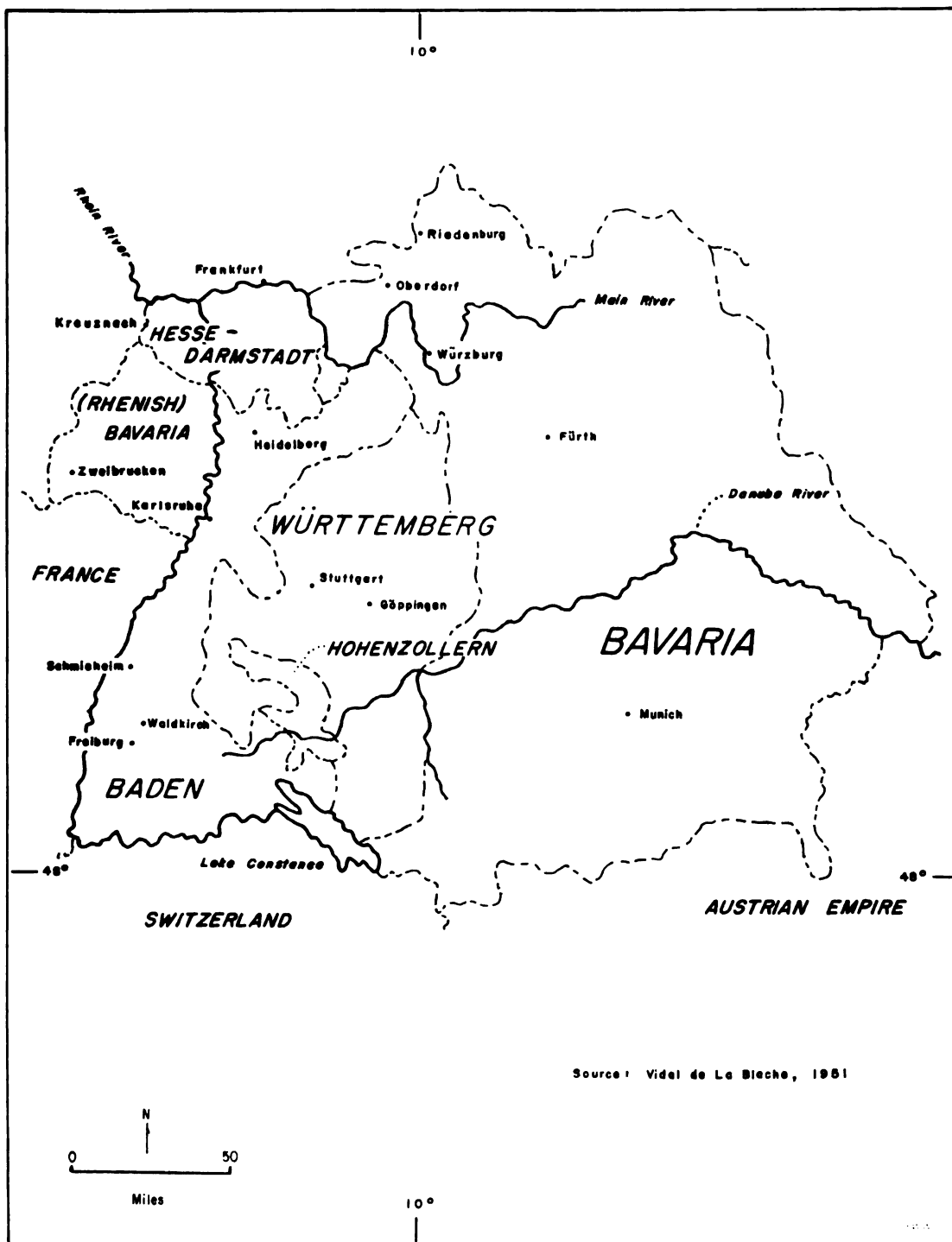


FIGURE 3.
HOMELAND OF THE GERMAN-JEWS

Many taxes, particularly in Bavaria, were levied specifically on persons of the Jewish faith. They included ". . . the alien-taxes, goose-taxes, horse-taxes, etc., etc., taxes, reintroduced everywhere by the Bavarian estates."¹¹ Some areas simply banished Jews, as in the Danish areas, but Bavaria faced a different situation in regard to the Jews. It had a checkerboard distribution of people. Some villages were entirely Gentile in population, others were entirely Jewish. The legal status of the latter was fixed by a number of laws and regulations. Depopulation of many towns would have resulted if the Bavarian princes had attempted to banish Jews from their realms. Through the introduction of the Jewish taxes, they were obviously taking advantage of a situation which had come to exist in their domains. The unfair taxation of Jews added another motive for emigration.

The levying of taxes on emigrants was another cause for migration from Germany.¹² Where Jewish emigration was not strictly forbidden, as it was in Prussia,¹³ there developed detailed regulations concerning the collection of taxes on Jewish emigrants. The customary amount of tax on Jewish emigrants was 10 per cent of the value of the property being

¹¹ Glanz, op. cit.

¹² Emigration, as defined in many of the regulations, did not necessarily pertain only to emigration abroad. It referred to migration out of the principality, even if only to a neighboring domain.

¹³ The distribution of Jews in Prussia was in sharp contrast to that in South Germany. In the latter, Jews resided in scattered groups in the small towns and villages. There was no large, well-organized Jewish community or sense of Jewish group life in southern Germany. Prussia, on the other hand, possessed large, well-organized Jewish communities which were well established in ghettos in the large cities.

removed from the domain.¹⁴ The taxes on Jews were by no means uniformly enforced, adding greatly to the grievances of the Jewish residents of southern Germany.

The laws regarding Jewish economic activity, especially after the Edict of 1813, were decidedly reactionary against the Jews. They were allowed to be farmers, artisans, or manufacturers. The restrictive laws permitted employment in few other fields. Most businesses, inn-keeping, for example, required the possession of a license. The number of licenses available to Jews was strictly limited in most areas. As a result, the migration of Jews from Bavaria increased rapidly after 1813. Glanz indicates that the Bavarian emigration had a direct effect on Jewish emigration from Baden and Württemberg with which the Bavarian Jewry was closely connected.¹⁵ Despite the Jewish emigration taxes, ten thousand Bavarian Jews had already emigrated by 1839, the eve of the mass migration.¹⁶ The movement was principally to the United States.

The Jewish population of Bavaria has been estimated at 53,208 in 1818.¹⁷ Thus, within a span of twenty years, one-fifth of the Bavarian Jewish population had emigrated to the United States. Glanz puts the number of Jewish emigrants from southern Germany as being far in excess

¹⁴Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 95 citing Krönitz Enzyklopädie, s.v. "Jude," Berlin, 1784 [p. 293-618], p. 523.

¹⁵Glanz, "The 'Bayer' and the 'Pollack' in America," p. 188; and Bernheim, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁶Hansen, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁷Glanz, Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 188 citing Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. iii, p. 1182.

of their proportion of the total population of the region.¹⁸ Glanz sums up the reasons for Jewish emigration from southern Germany: anti-semitism, including the great obstacles in the way of becoming residents, and the hated Jewish taxes.¹⁹ Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, in his autobiography, claims that "out in the open a Jew might and did suffer abuse, contumely, and derision, experience all kinds of disappointments, make sacrifices innumerable in order to earn enough to hold body and soul together."²⁰ Emigration became the only method, for most Jewish men, other than accepting baptism, of alleviating the situation into which they had been born. The younger generation, in particular, saw no hope for itself in Germany because of the special disabilities imposed upon Jews. ". . . All this tends to cause young, strong men and even those of more advanced age, to seek their salvation in other regions of the earth, where they don't at least have to bear this!"²¹

Crevecoeur, in speaking of earlier migrations (1782), states reasons for migration to the United States which can also be applied to the German-Jews of a later period:

¹⁸Rudolf Glanz, "German-Jewish Names in America," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 278.

¹⁹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 77.

²⁰Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, The Story of the Bernheim Family (Louisville: John P. Morton & Company, 1910), p. 4.

²¹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 93 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, (1839), no. 24, p. 420.

Can a wretch who wanders about . . . whose life is a continued scene of sore affliction . . . call England or any other Kingdom his country? A country that had . . . nothing [for him] but . . . the severity of the laws . . .? No! Urged by a variety of motives, here they came.²²

Numerous problems arise in any attempt to determine the identity of the German-Jewish immigrants, particularly during the years 1790-1820. The only port records preserved from that period to any extent are those from the port of Philadelphia. The Customs Immigration Lists, maintained by the federal government, did not commence until 1820. Philadelphia, however, was the most important port in the United States before 1820 as far as the immigration of the German-Jews was concerned. Rodeph Shalom, the first German-Jewish congregation in the United States, was founded in Philadelphia in 1780. German-Jews, by 1790, were important in the social and economic life of the city, establishing it as the primary port of entry for German-Jews until being surpassed by New York shortly before 1820.

The number of German-Jewish immigrants in the United States was negligible until about 1790. The only arrival of that year, with an obviously Jewish name, was David Israel.²³ Simon Abraham sailed from Rotterdam in 1796.²⁴ There were undoubtedly other immigrants of the Jewish faith throughout the decade, but many possessed names which were not necessarily of Jewish origin, thereby obscuring their origin

²²J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 62.

²³Ralph B. Strassburger, Pennsylvania German Pioneers, III (Norristown, Pa: Pennsylvania German Society, 1934), p. 41.

²⁴Ibid., p. 91.

and identity. The pace quickened after the turn of the century. Three Jews, Jacob Moses, Jacob Epstein, and Senf Mois. Schiff, arrived from Amsterdam aboard the ship Favourite in 1803.²⁵ According to Kabor, 1803 also marks the oldest official notice of a Jewish emigrant from Württemberg to the United States.²⁶ The arrival of the ship Atlantic (1804) brought at least six German-Jews to these shores: Israel Solomon, Isaac Israel, Abraham Israel, L.M. Goldswidt, Moses Jacobs, and Rosina Jacobs. They will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Two other Jews who arrived in Philadelphia in 1804 were Levi Solomon, from Lübeck, aboard the brig Leopard,²⁷ and Juda Bair Levy, a sixteen year old native of Kreuznach, Germany, aboard the ship Margaret.²⁸ Glanz concludes from his research that at least seven German-Jews emigrated to the United States in 1804, out of a total German emigration of 900 persons.²⁹ Two years later (1806) at least four Jews arrived at Philadelphia: Jacob Israel,³⁰ Hirsch Leib, Samuel Jacobs, and Meirs Samuel,³¹ the latter three from Amsterdam.

²⁵Ibid., p. 135; also mentioned in Glanz, "German-Jewish Names in America," p. 279.

²⁶ Adolf Kabor, "Jewish Emigration from Württemberg, 1848-1855," The Jewish Experience in America: Selected Studies from the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, ed. by Abraham Karp, III (Waltham, Mass: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), p. 17.

²⁷Strassburger, op. cit., p. 144.

²⁸Ibid., p. 156.

²⁹Glanz, "German-Jewish Names in America," p. 279.

³⁰Strassburger, op. cit., p. 184 citing passenger list for the brig Kathrine.

³¹Ibid., p. 189.

The statistics from the ships passenger lists recorded at the four major ports of the Atlantic coast - New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston - from later years indicate a fluctuating arrival pattern of German-Jews. The port of Boston was of little importance to the overall German-Jewish immigration because, as Rosenswaike indicates, there was no well-established Jewish community in that city to attract the attention of the immigrating German-Jews.³² The ships passenger lists do not indicate the religious affiliation of the immigrant, so we can only approximate the number of German-Jewish immigrants before 1840. Table 1 illustrates the fluctuating pattern of emigration from Germany to the United States commencing in 1820.³³ No figures indicating the number of representatives of the Jewish faith are given in the annual totals.³⁴ It is doubtful, however, that the number of Jews exceeded 10 per cent of the total German emigration during the period 1820-1840. However, considering even this small percentage, the number of German-Jews entering the United States during this period would have been substantial. One Jewish scholar estimates that during this period, 1820-1840, the German-Jewish emigration to the United States averaged

³²Ira Rosenswaike, "The Jewish Population of the United States as Estimated from the Census of 1820," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 53 (1963-64), p. 148.

³³Few port records from the period 1806-1820 are now extant, however, there were sporadic interruptions to ship traffic between Europe and North America throughout the period due to the existing state of war.

³⁴Kohler (1901) notes that one estimate in 1849 put the number of German Christian immigrants at one-twentieth the number of German immigrants to America. This is unquestionably an exaggeration of the true number of Jewish immigrants.

TABLE 1.

ANNUAL EMIGRATION FROM GERMANY TO THE UNITED STATES³⁵

Year	Emigrants	Year	Emigrants
1820	968	1831	2,413
1821	383	1832	10,194
1822	148	1833	6,988
1823	183	1834	17,686
1824	230	1835	8,311
1825	450	1836	20,707
1826	511	1837	23,740
1827	432	1838	11,683
1828	1,851	1839	21,028
1829	597	1840	29,704
1830	1,976		

³⁵Kabor, op. cit., p. 13 citing U.S., Congress, Senate, Reports of the Immigration Commission, Emigration Conditions in Europe, S. Doc. 12, 61st Cong., 3rd sess., 1911, pp. 6-8.

more than one thousand persons per year, reaching a few thousand in peak years.³⁶ Indications are that the number of German-Jewish immigrants arriving in the United States between 1790 and 1827 increased steadily each year.³⁷ There was some fluctuation during the war years, an upsurge occurring in conjunction with the institution of the Jew-law in Bavaria in 1813, then another upsurge after the fall of Napoleon in 1814. The emigration of Jews from Germany was far in excess of their proportion of their total population between 1814 and 1827. The emigration of German-Jews then increased rapidly in conjunction with the general increase in emigration of all religious faiths. Until about 1840, the Jewish emigrants were primarily single men. After 1840 the Jewish emigration was made up principally of families and groups of families migrating en masse.

Rosenswaiké indicates that in 1820 there were approximately 2,650 to 2,750 German-Jews residing in the United States, compared to approximately 53,000 still in Bavaria.³⁸ Kabor estimates the German-Jewish population of the United States at 6,000 in 1825;³⁹ it reached approximately 15,000 by 1840.⁴⁰ Glanz reaches the same conclusion regarding the 1840 population estimate.⁴¹ Hansen accepts a similar German-Jewish

³⁶Bernard D. Weinryb, "The German Jewish Immigrants to America: A Critical Evaluation," in Jews from Germany in the United States, edited by Eric E. Hirshler (New York: Farrar, Straus and Oudahy, 1955), p. 103.

³⁷Strassburger, op. cit.; and Kabor, op. cit.

³⁸Rosenswaiké, op. cit., p. 148.

³⁹Kabor, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁰Stern, op. cit., p. 299.

⁴¹Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews up to 1880," YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, II-III (1947-48), p. 81.

population estimate. His figures tell us that "by 1839 ten thousand Bavarian Jews had emigrated, and the whole number [of Jews from all sources] in America was estimated at fifteen thousand."⁴² Emigration had reached such proportions by 1839 that Jewish authorities in Germany were becoming increasingly alarmed. Entire Jewish towns and villages were in danger of becoming depopulated; schools and synagogues were closing throughout southern Germany as the mass migration gained momentum.

Characteristics of the German-Jewish Immigrants

That the German-Jewish immigrants were impoverished is beyond question.⁴³ The ships passenger lists confirm this assumption. Six Jews, Israel Solomon, Isaac Israel, Abraham Israel, L.M. Goldsmidt, Moses Jacobs, and Rosina Jacobs, arrived in Philadelphia in September of 1804. They were steerage passengers aboard the ship Atlantic, from Amsterdam.⁴⁴ Jacob Israel arrived June 5, 1806 at the port of Philadelphia aboard the brig Kathrine, from Tonnigen.⁴⁵ He too was a steerage passenger. A Jewish periodical of 1837 described the Jewish passengers aboard a ship bound for the United States as being in a "most pitiful condition."⁴⁶ Most German-Jewish immigrants of the period were undoubtedly in similar

⁴²Hansen, op. cit., p. 140.

⁴³Weinryb, op. cit., p. 116; and Eban, op. cit., p. 303.

⁴⁴Strassburger, op. cit., p. 153.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 184.

⁴⁶Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 111 citing Die Synagoge, vol. 1 (Würsburg, 1837), p. 104.

straits during the crossing of the Atlantic. The immigrant ships of the first half of the nineteenth century were freighters of three hundred to four hundred tons. They carried cotton, timber, and tobacco on the eastward voyage, returning in ballast. Steerage was usually a four to six feet high deck, filled to capacity with hard wooden berths. The long voyage of one to two months was fraught with disease, hunger and death.⁴⁷ The conditions aboard the immigrant ships did not, however, discourage Jews from emigrating, or from going into debt in their attempt to reach the United States. Salomon Joseph, as an example, arrived from Rotterdam aboard the ship *Belvidere* in 1802.⁴⁸ His fare for the passage to Philadelphia was 180 guilders. He was advanced 3.10 guilders. The total debt owed to his benefactor - who was not stated, but presumably was the ship's captain - was 183.10 guilders. He was willing to assume this obligation to achieve his objective. Others depleted their savings in their attempts to reach the United States. Philip Heidelbach, a Bavarian Jew, arrived in New York in 1837 with only eight dollars; Jacob Elsas left Germany with the equivalent of sixty dollars. When he reached New York, he had only forty cents left.⁴⁹

Kisch published one of the few surviving accounts of a German-Jewish emigrant of the period 1790-1840. Wolf Samuel was a native of Brackenheim in Württemberg. He sailed from Amsterdam on September 13, 1818. His first

⁴⁷Weinryb, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁸Strassburger, op. cit., p. 113

⁴⁹Maxwell Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods and Clothing: An Introduction to the Study of the Cincinnati Peddler," The Jewish Quarterly Review, LIII (1963), pp. 312-13.

letter to his parents, written from Peach Bottom, York County, Pennsylvania on June 27, 1819, recalls his journey to the United States aboard the ship *Vrouw Elizabeth*. The ship carried ninety-six passengers, six of whom were Jews, arriving in Baltimore after a voyage of five months. Kisch reports that Samuel had signed a bill of exchange in Amsterdam on July 6, 1818 in which he bound himself to pay 190 guilders, for passage to America, to the order of F. Krebs and Son. It was made payable a week after his arrival in the United States. The bill was endorsed by the creditors on September 5, 1818 in favor of Captain Hendrik Bredero of the ship *Vrouw Elizabeth*.⁵⁰ Many of the German-Jewish immigrants were, as was Wolf Samuel, simply too impoverished to pay in advance for their passage to the United States. Others were financially capable of paying for the passage in advance, but nearly all were left destitute upon arrival in the United States.

Few of the Jewish emigrants from Germany during the period 1790-1840 were married. The laws which prevented their marriage were among the motives for fleeing Germany. Jewish periodicals of the 1830's were reporting that while Gentiles were emigrating in family groups, Jews were traveling as single persons.⁵¹ Married men had fewer grievances in Germany. They had been granted Letters of Protection allowing them to follow a trade and establish a domicile thereby permitting their marriage. The above article continues, "the Jewish emigration appears to be due less

⁵⁰Guido Kisch, "German Jews in White Labor Servitude in America," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 34 (1937), p. 28.

⁵¹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 111 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, May 4, 1839, p. 215; Weinryb, op. cit., p. 109; and Philipson, op. cit., p. 12.

to greed for gain than to the consciousness of being unable in any other way to achieve independence or to found a family."⁵²

Some of the emigrants were apprentices and journeymen who had learned a trade, but, because of restrictive quotas on the number of Jews in various occupations, could not practice it. Grinstein estimates, however, that at least 30 per cent of the immigrants had been peddlers in Germany. This, he states, is indicated by the fact that "most of them had been Luftmenschen in their previous homes; men without specific vocational training, or, perhaps, at most some experience in petty trading."⁵³ Jewish records in the United States frequently refer to residents in the American port of entry who had equipped an immigrant with a basket and sent him out to peddle. If these immigrants had known any craft or trade which could have earned them a livelihood in the United States, it is safe to assume that they would at least have attempted to follow their vocation upon arrival. The record indicates that they did not do so. This would confirm the assumption that they had no training in any craft whatever.

The young Jewish emigrant, nevertheless, was optimistic. Even after all hope for the young Jewish residents of southern Germany collapsed during the reactionary period following the battle of Waterloo, there was still a future for them elsewhere. What Germany did not offer them, America did. Israel Joseph Benjamin, a German-Jewish traveler in the United States from 1859 until 1862 comments, they "brought along . . .

⁵²Glans, "Source Materials," p. 111 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, May 4, 1839, p. 215.

⁵³Hyman B. Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), p. 129.

optimism joined with sound common sense, . . . and a ready arm, . . . inexhaustible perseverance, together with those peculiarly Jewish traits, economy and sobriety."⁵⁴

"They are emigrating, indeed."⁵⁵ They emigrated from the poor villages, small towns and rural areas of southern Germany. Bavaria contributed, by far, the largest number of Jewish emigrants to the United States, followed by Württemberg and Baden.⁵⁶ Jewish emigration was also occurring in Saxony, Palatinate, Hesse, and Oldenburg, but not to the extent that it was occurring in the other three states.

The language they brought with them was German, though some knew Hebrew and wrote home in Jewish vernacular,⁵⁷ or Judeo-German (Yiddish).⁵⁸ The German-Jews were later to be attacked in the American Jewish press for speaking German in the United States and for teaching German to their children.⁵⁹ They did not, however, bring with them a highly developed sense of Jewish group life. They had not known nor lived in compact, close-knit Jewish communities in Germany. Anti-semitic laws and attitudes had prevented that. They lived in small towns and villages in Germany, without the benefit of a well-organized Jewish community life. They

⁵⁴Kohler, op. cit., p. 96.

⁵⁵Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 108 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, September 9, 1837, no. 66.

⁵⁶Weinryb, op. cit., p. 116; and Kohler, op. cit., p. 94.

⁵⁷Glanz, "The 'Bayer' and the 'Pollack' in America," p. 201; and Weinryb, op. cit., p. 111.

⁵⁸Hirshler, op. cit., p. 115

⁵⁹Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews up to 1880," p. 94.

would, of course, seek out similar physical surroundings in the United States.

The emigrants were Jews, first and foremost. Secondly, they were Germans and remained steadfast in their desire to transplant the habits of the life they had inherited in Germany.⁶⁰ "The German Jewish immigrant," Glanz points out, "wished to preserve here what he cherished of his old home and did not find in the new. And that was all!"⁶¹ The German-Jewish immigrant in the United States was fleeing anti-semitism, not necessarily Germany.

Culture change, however, commenced as soon as the emigrant Jew was aboard the ship bound for the United States. Wolf Samuel wrote home to his parents telling them that his master in the United States was a Dutch Jew. He was not Jewish at all. Samuel, according to Weinryb, was apparently attempting to ease his parents' fear that he was eating non-kosher food.⁶² He had probably not eaten kosher food since embarking from Europe. The journey to the United States meant, of course, a relaxation of religious practices. The immigrant Jews were certainly not able to observe Jewish dietary laws in steerage, nor were they probably able to observe any other religious obligations. Steerage was notoriously filled with roughnecks and indentured servants who would have ridiculed the sixteen or seventeen year old Jew for such observances. Although

⁶⁰Rudolf Glanz, "Jews in Relation to the Cultural Milieu of the Germans in America up to the Eighteen Eighties," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 205.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Weinryb, op. cit., p. 119.

they were believing and observant Jews, it was next to impossible for them to avoid committing occasional transgressions while aboard the ship bound for the United States. Weinryb adds another element already at work in Germany which smoothed the way for the easing of religious observances; "They seem to have been further swayed in this direction not only by the individual attitude, but also by some current trend toward relaxation of certain religious practices . . . among the village Jews in Germany."⁶³

The German-Jewish emigrant has been pictured as being a young man, but not all were in that category: ". . . at Riedenburg, a village in the province of Brueckenau, an old man of eighty-five has decided to migrate to America."⁶⁴ Hyman Lazarus, who settled in Morgan County, Ohio in 1818, was in his mid-forties when he emigrated from his home in Germany. Emigrants over the age of thirty were, however, a distinct minority. The vast majority of the immigrants were young men. They were among the "underprivileged groups, [the] second and third sons; and, perhaps, in part, even from the lowest groups, the transients."⁶⁵ Glanz adds that the emigrant might even have been the "eighth, ninth,

⁶³Ibid., pp. 110-11.

⁶⁴Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 109 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, March 30, 1839, p. 135.

⁶⁵Weinryb, op. cit., p. 109. It is doubtful that many Jews from the latter class would have been capable of emigrating. They were financially incapable of raising enough money for passage to the United States. Nor did they have any skills or training to offer as security to obtain credit and migrate as indentured servants.

or even eleventh son."⁶⁶ This was especially true after the promulgation of the Jew-law of 1813, enacted through the efforts of Count Maximilian von Montgelas, Minister of Finance for Bavaria. The law encouraged emigration abroad of younger sons by prohibiting their right to receive Letters of Protection which would allow them to establish domiciles.⁶⁷ Kohler describes the young German-Jewish immigrant in blunter terms:

The former were persons whose forefathers for ages had been subjected to every kind of degrading persecution, and had been debarred from pursuing any ennobling avocations; persons who themselves had neither been endowed by their fathers with worldly goods, nor with liberal knowledge. Nevertheless, to their credit be it said, these German-Israelites, uncouth, illiterate, narrow-minded and poor, as the greater part of them must have been, friendless, without resources, and ignorant of the English language, as they unquestionably were, by dint of strict frugality, of unceasing activity, of indomitable energy, of considerable innate, if uncultivated, abilities, succeeded in acquiring more or less considerable fortunes, and in raising themselves to positions of trust and honor.⁶⁸

Immigrant Aid

Tsedaka, or charity, is an important element within all Jewish communities.⁶⁹ No institutional form of charity, however, was necessary for the German-Jewish immigrant of the period 1790-1840. As discussed earlier, they came as single men; free from the responsibilities of providing for the feeding and housing of others.⁷⁰ Because they came as

⁶⁶Glanz, "The 'Bayer' and the 'Pollack' in America," p. 190.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 192.

⁶⁸Kohler, op. cit., p. 90.

⁶⁹Bernard H. Pucker, "Immigrant Aid within the Jewish Community, 1780-1860," (unpublished essay, Lexington, Mass., 1964), p. 1.

⁷⁰Eban, op. cit., p. 302.

individuals, the Jewish communities in the United States were able to care for them on an individual basis.

If the immigrant knew no one in the United States, he would seek out the nearest Jew upon arrival.⁷¹ He would find himself a friendly home, "inevitably there arose the question of how the immigrant should make a living . . . when [it was discovered that] the immigrant had been a Luftmensch on the other side, there was no alternative but . . ." for the host to recommend peddling.⁷² Often the host himself would fit the immigrant with a basket and send him out to peddle, giving him his first supply of wares on credit.

The first Jewish immigrant aid society in the United States, Ezrath Orechim, was founded in Philadelphia in 1783.⁷³ It was a special fund of the Tsedaka of the Congregation Mikveh Israel. The establishment of this charity aided in the early promotion of Philadelphia as the primary port of entry for German-Jews into the United States. In 1822, the Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded in New York, offering an indication that New York had bypassed Philadelphia in importance as the German-Jews' port of entry. The leadership of the Hebrew Benevolent Society was composed largely of German-Jews. The immigrant Jew, if he had no other resources, could draw upon these charities.

Weinryb mentions yet another method of immigrant financing, one which

⁷¹Bernheim, The Settlement of Jews in the Lower Ohio Valley, p. 14.

⁷²Grinstein, op. cit., p. 65.

⁷³Pucker, op. cit., p. 6.

has already been mentioned in this chapter. That method was the redemptioner trade (indentured servants).⁷⁴ Although it passed out of existence during the 1820's, it was nevertheless an important method in bringing German-Jews to the United States during the first half of the study period. This was a system whereby a person bound himself to serve a certain number of years to the person who paid his debts - usually the cost of the passage to the United States. Ship captains usually paid the passage of the redemptioner, selling him to another person upon arrival in the United States. We have already discussed two young German-Jews who utilized this method of financing their passage to the United States. Undoubtedly many others came as indentured servants.

⁷⁴Weinryb, op. cit., p. 109.

CHAPTER III
PEDDLING IN THE UPPER OHIO VALLEY

Why Peddling?

Without question, the vast majority of the German-Jewish immigrants of the period 1790-1840 began their new life in the United States by engaging in peddling.¹

Buchalter lists six reasons for the choice of peddling by the German-Jewish immigrants;² 1) There was little or no initial investment on the part of the immigrant.³ As discussed in Chapter II, the German-Jewish immigrants were poverty stricken, often arriving in the United States with little more than a few dollars in their pockets. Numerous Jewish immigrants were given their first supply of goods on credit by sympathetic Jewish residents of the port city. In those cases, there was no initial investment on the part of the immigrant whatever. 2) The German-Jewish immigrant had left anti-semitism, ridicule, and disrespect behind

¹Letter from Malcolm H. Stern, genealogist, American Jewish Archives, New York, March 1, 1972; Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews up to 1880," p. 92; Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 121; Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, The Jews of the United States, a Documentary History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 98; and Jacob R. Marcus, Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865, III (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), p. 6.

²Jehudah Ben Haym Buchalter, "A Letter from the New Country," in Hasefirah, 180 (1895), p. 684. Translated from Classical Hebrew by Mrs. Josef Bental, East Lansing, Michigan.

³See also Whiteman, op. cit., p. 307.



FIGURE 4.

ISAAC WOLFE BERNHEIM,
A GERMAN-JEWISH PEDDLER

him in southern Germany. What he wanted in the United States, above all else, was to be respected and accepted. Peddling was an honorable profession that they were capable of performing and which would gain them the respect of the native Americans.⁴ They had little vocational training at home and though they might have been qualified for manual labor, felt that laborers were scorned in the United States. 3) There was a fast return on the investment made in purchasing their goods. There was no waiting for a salary; it came immediately. The peddler could work at his own rate, earning more or less, depending on his own abilities and ambition. He was free and independent. Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, in his reminiscences about his peddling days, says, "I trudged along the peaceful Pennsylvania highways dreaming of future triumphs. Life glittered with golden promise of coming rise as a country storekeeper or of manorial affluence on a prosperous farm. I liked the life in the open, . . ."⁵ In addition, there were no accounting problems. The peddler bought low, attempted to sell high. He knew at all times what his profit margin was. 5) Peddling encouraged the peddler to learn English rapidly in order to survive financially. They could sell their wares, of course, without any knowledge of the English language, but knowledge of the language opened new territory to them, made them better bargainers. 6) Many were, according to Buchalter, thieves and murderers, running

⁴Deborah, I (1856), p. 266 confirms that "most of the poor and needy German-Jews were forced to go into peddling, which was not as degrading here as in Germany, . . ."

⁵Bernheim, The Story of the Bernheim Family, p. 37.

from the law.⁶ They simply wanted to be given another chance to prove to themselves and to others that they could be honorable men.

Grinstein adds that the immigrants' first contact in the United States was frequently a German-Jewish merchant in the port city.⁷ Most of the port merchants realized from their own experience that the small initial investment involved in supplying the foot peddler would be sufficient for the immigrant to be a success. Frequently the merchant would hire the immigrant to distribute his products in the back-country; both the merchant and the immigrant gained from such an arrangement.

Peddling did, however, possess some disadvantages according to Buchalter.⁸ The peddlers were, understandably, the first to feel an economic downturn. The items sold by the peddlers were usually those which the customer did not consider necessities. In times of economic slumps, the peddler would, of course, have difficulty in locating buyers. As Buchalter states, the rich did not buy from peddlers. They could afford to travel to the large cities to buy from established merchants. The peddlers' customers were the workers, poor people, and farmers, who were unable to travel and who did not have extra money to spend on frills during times of panic or depression. Frequently the exchange rate between Eastern and Western currency was so great that in buying new supplies, the peddler would discover that he had lost all his profit from the

⁶This is the only reference the writer found which referred to any of the German-Jewish peddlers as being criminals at large.

⁷Grinstein, op. cit., p. 129.

⁸Buchalter, op. cit., p. 688.

previous trip. More than one peddler lost his total investment when he sold in the West and bought in the East. The second disadvantage, as far as their religious life was concerned, was the fact that most of their business was carried out on Fridays and Saturdays, thereby making observance of the Sabbath difficult.

Peddling, for most German-Jewish immigrants, was simply the "first round in the ladder of success, the profits of the first few weeks being employed in paying off the original liabilities of the stock . . ."⁹ As has already been discussed, most were impoverished when they arrived in the United States.¹⁰ A vocation was needed which would bring an immediate return. The peddler found it absolutely imperative that he build up a reserve to buy a permanent establishment, or to repay his passage money, "learning [also], in the quickest way, the manner of American life."¹¹ Hyman Lazarus, "a Jew who had previously tramped about the country as a peddler,"¹² gave up peddling as soon as he had accumulated enough cash to buy a small store in Malta, Ohio.¹³ He did as the majority of German-Jewish peddlers of the period had done, "trudged . . .

⁹Kohler, op. cit., p. 97.

¹⁰Joseph Austrian, for example, had only twelve dollars in his pocket when he arrived in the United States. Many others had far less.

¹¹Richard Banta, The Ohio (New York: Rinehart, 1949), p. 279.

¹²Charles Robertson, History of Morgan County, Ohio (Chicago: L.H. Watkins and Co., 1886), p. 343.

¹³Morgan County (Ohio) Deed Book A, p. 12. Hyman Lazarus purchased lot 6, located on Front Street, on the west bank of the Muskingum River, in the village of Malta on June 2, 1819. There are indications, however, that he settled there in 1818.

through the length and breadth of the country until . . . [accumulating/ enough capital for a permanent establishment.¹⁴ Many were simply carrying on only that which they knew; ". . . our own people," declares the Occident, "who from the most industrious farming population have for centuries, through the force of oppression, been reduced to a set of small traders, money-lenders, peddlers [sic], and itinerants of all sorts."¹⁵ Seven years later (1855), the Occident again reaffirms the assumption that Jews from Germany had been peddlers; ". . . the efforts that have been made for centuries, by the tyrants of Europe, to debase and extinguish the Jewish intellect, by debarring them from the exercise of any avocation or employment other than that of traffic . . . either as bankers, merchants, or the more humble peddler."¹⁶ Isaac Bernheim's grandfather, Solomon Bernheim, was a soldier in the French Army under Napoleon. On his discharge he became, as Bernheim calls him, an "itinerant merchant," or peddler, operating out of Walddirch, in Baden (see Figure 3). He later returned to his former home in Schmicheim, also in Baden, and became the first Jew to receive permission to open a regular store in the village.¹⁷ He was successful and was able to send his children to the school in nearby Ettenheim.¹⁸ Most German-Jews were not

¹⁴Hansen, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁵"Charitable Institutions," Occident, V (1848), p. 471. Grinstein (1945) estimates that 30 per cent of the German-Jewish immigrants had been peddlers in Germany.

¹⁶"Dedication of the School-house of the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia," Occident, XII (1855), p. 504.

¹⁷Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, The Story of the Bernheim Family, p. 3.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 4.

so fortunate. Peddling, in fact, had been contemptuously associated with the petty trade of the village Jews in southern Germany for decades. It was an exceptional case when a Jew was able to leave the peddler's pack and become a storekeeper. Peddling, in most instances, was the only trade the immigrant German-Jew knew. In the United States peddling did not carry the contempt it had in Europe, so it was a natural occupation for the immigrant to engage in.¹⁹

Many a young Jew left the master to whom he had been indentured, with or without the master's blessings, only to travel to Pittsburgh or Wheeling "with his pack full of notions,"²⁰ secure passage on a boat and float downstream "swapping by the way until he heard of a likely town to settle in."²¹ Joseph Austrian had no idea regarding what he would do to earn a living upon arrival in the United States. He met a fellow Jew after his arrival in the United States, explained his plight - as stated above, he arrived with only twelve dollars - and was advised to invest his money in notions. His advisor offered to get him started. "As he spoke English and I could not understand one word, I gladly accepted his proposition. We started off at once, . . ."²² Austrian's first peddling venture was successful; selling a few dollars worth of

¹⁹Whiteman, op. cit., p. 308.

²⁰Banta, op. cit., p. 278.

²¹Ibid.

²²Joseph Austrian, Autobiographical and Historical Sketches (Chicago: n.p., 1904), p. 14.

goods. At the end of the first five days he had a profit of two dollars; "fair success," Austrian calls it.²³ On his own, he chose to peddle in the back country "where the roads to the city were very bad and I calculated the difficulty offered people in going to and fro, would be to my advantage."²⁴ Other peddlers would, of course, reach the same conclusion and peddle in the rural areas:

Naturally the peddler picks out invariably that stretch of the country in which the majority of settlements are situated and which is still the least infested by his colleagues; thereupon he goes from one farm to another and asks whether the inhabitants are in need of his wares. Usually the answer is 'No!' But as the husband is rarely at home and women would invariably fain see what precious trinkets the seller does really carry hidden in that large, heavy pack, he easily obtains permission to open his pack and spread out his wares.²⁵

The people of the Upper Ohio Valley were settled in small villages and towns, or on isolated farms, frequently miles distant from one another. Permanently established stores could offer their goods only to those who lived in the vicinity. The farmer could not leave his land unattended to journey into the village or town to purchase items which were unessential to his livelihood. He could, and would, however, procure them if they were near at hand. Into this void stepped the German-Jewish peddler. He was sent out by a merchant or wholesaler to attempt to sell those items which the farmer or village resident would not buy otherwise. Or he was, as Joseph Austrian, an independent peddler; buying supplies where he could obtain them for the lowest price and reselling them for the highest

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵Glantz, "Source Materials," p. 129 citing W.C. Friedrich, Gerstaecker's Gesammelte Schriften, (Jena 1872-74), vol. x, p. 196.

possible profit. Most of the merchants and wholesalers who employed or stocked the peddlers were located in the large river towns: Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Marietta, Cincinnati, or Louisville. Some peddlers may have also gone downstream to St. Louis to obtain their supplies, but these were probably few because of the difficulty in transporting their wares back up-river. Philadelphia merchants, including many Jewish firms such as the Gratz Brothers, were establishing warehouses and outlets throughout the Ohio Valley.²⁶ The Jewish firms would, out of loyalty to their co-religionists, attempt to employ a German-Jew to peddle their wares for them. Independent German-Jewish peddlers would, of course, out of a desire to receive a fair deal, patronize a Jewish establishment when replenishing their stock. Although the peddlers could be expected to realize a slight profit from their sales, the profit of many of the suppliers was frequently substantial. John Beauchamp Jones, writing under the pseudonym, Luke Shortfield, complains that he had to obtain his supplies from "Keen, Cuning and Company, of Philadelphia."²⁷ The buyer had to keep his wits when dealing with the wholesalers in order to prevent being cheated by them. The immigrant German-Jew, ignorant of the English language, could be easily cheated by the wholesalers and undoubtedly many were.

Isaac Leeser's Occident asks what can be done to help the immigrants, "such as to lift them above their state of indigence?"²⁸ For many years

²⁶Blau and Baron, op. cit., p. 130.

²⁷Shortfield, op. cit., p. 162.

²⁸Occident, IV (1857), p. 279.

the immigrants had been given a "small pack of any sort of valuable goods,"²⁹ then sent out to peddle among the people of the small towns and villages, and to the farmers. The article continues, "this system must come to an end; it is nearly overdone now; . . ."³⁰ Two years earlier (1855), the same periodical had called for an alternative to peddling for the immigrants; "apprentices are better than to encourage a system of hawking and peddling . . . which . . . is a most degrading and pernicious occupation."³¹ American Jewish leaders continually spoke out against peddling, not only because they considered it degrading, but they were aware of the consequences regarding the effects of it on the Jewish culture of the peddler.

Licenses, before 1840, were a small obstacle to the peddlers, but these were not overly restrictive and any immigrant could easily obtain one with only a minimum of effort. Pennsylvania enacted its first law regarding peddling in 1729. It was probably the most restrictive of the laws concerning peddling to be in effect within the study area. Among other minor requirements, the law stated that the prospective peddler could only obtain a license after obtaining a recommendation from the court regarding "the honesty of the person recommended and [certifying] that he or she is a liver within this province."³² The standard fee in Pennsylvania appears to have been ten dollars a year, although the law

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹"The Jews in Jamaica," Occident XII (1855), p. 571.

³²Pennsylvania, Statutes at Large (1729), CCCVIII, p. 142.

authorized local governmental agencies to establish higher fees. Persons peddling without a license were to be treated as common vagrants and punished accordingly. The same law, amended numerous times, was still in effect at the end of the nineteenth century. Virginia had a similar licensing requirement; it too carried over from the Colonial period. Kentucky required that peddlers licenses be obtained from the county clerk of any county of the Commonwealth.³³ The fee was, again, ten dollars. The license was valid for one year from the date of issue and was valid throughout Kentucky, irregardless of where it was purchased. The fine for not possessing a peddlers license in Kentucky was ten dollars. The Northwest Territory enacted its first licensing requirement, which applied to peddlers, in 1799.³⁴ The fee, in this case also, was ten dollars per year. The penalty for peddling without a license was eighteen dollars. Ohio and Indiana, after achieving separate status, simply re-enacted the law of the Northwest Territory, with slight increases in fees and substantial increases in the penalties for peddling without a license. Many peddlers, willing to assume the risks involved, disregarded the licensing requirement. The laws did not apply to persons who peddled from riverboats, further encouraging peddlers to remain in close proximity to navigable rivers.

The German-Jewish immigrant, taking up the role of peddler that the Yankee had abandoned, was fulfilling a role that seemed to be especially created for him. He followed the German immigrants into the interior of

³³Kentucky, Statute Laws (1806), CCCXLVII, p. 342.

³⁴Theodore Pease, ed., The Laws of the Northwest Territory, 1788-1800 (Danville, Illinois: Illinois Historical Collections, 1925), p. 481.

America, and supplied them with items which kept them in contact with the outside world.

Journey into the Wilderness

During the period of this study, there were few choices regarding the route to follow into the interior of the United States. The vast majority of the German-Jewish immigrants, as has been discussed earlier, entered the United States through the ports of New York, Philadelphia, and, occasionally, Baltimore. They immediately began peddling, following the German immigrants into the West. They peddled their wares as they moved westward, eventually reaching the Ohio River Valley, their goal.

The market that the peddlers sought was in the Ohio Valley. There were the isolated villages and farms which needed the services that only the peddler could bring:

The country is big and there are still places . . . where people are so good-natured or so simple that they allow themselves to be duped a little. Sam finds these places and the farmers are happy to see the peddler, for then they need not make the long journey to the city. But Sam is still happier, since he sells at 200 per cent profit and gets a night's lodging and evening meal free.³⁵

The peddlers were frequently successful in business because the established merchants, who were few in number, carried only those items for which there was a ready market - the bare necessities of life. Seldom could they afford to stock the frills and trinkets that were the stock in trade of the German-Jewish peddler. They could not bother with items such as notions, dry goods, and ready-made clothing, except by ordering them

³⁵Glans, "Source Materials," p. 135 citing Theodor Griesinger, Lebende Bilder aus Amerika, pp. 20-25.

especially for one resident who might have requested such articles. The peddler could offer what the merchants could not, more rapidly, and at a lower price.³⁶

The market, as stated above, was, indeed, large and expanding. The federal census of 1790 shows that there were nearly 56,000 inhabitants in the area now forming the state of West Virginia.³⁷ Kentucky contained approximately 73,000 persons by 1790; Ohio, only ten years later (1800), possessed 45,365 inhabitants. Although the totals above do not indicate the number of persons residing in the study area, it can be assumed that at least half, if not more, of the total population did. Due to the influence of the Ohio River on immigration, the greatest number of persons would have been attracted to settle within its vicinity. There was probably a market of well over 100,000 persons within the study area by 1800.

This large and growing market needed the products of the East. The Gratz Brothers,³⁸ and other mercantile firms of the East, were opening business ventures in the West during the early years of this study. The market was expanding, the supplies were available; the way was open for the introduction of a distributor - the German-Jewish peddler.

³⁶Lee Max Friedman, "The Problems of Nineteenth Century American Jewish Peddlers," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 44 (1954-55), p. 4.

³⁷Abraham Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry: Origins and History, 1850-1958 (Philadelphia: Press of M. Jacobs, 1963), p. 15 states that his research indicates a population of 55,873 in the area now forming West Virginia in 1790.

³⁸The Gratz Brothers were among the first land-owners (1780) in the Pittsburgh area. For more information on their activities, see William Vincent Byars, B. and M. Gratz, Merchants in Philadelphia, 1754-1798 (Jefferson City, Mo: The Hugh Stephenson Printing Co., 1916).

Pennsylvania issued Indian trading licenses in 1765 to Abraham Moses and Moses Abraham; in 1772 to Abraham Levy; in 1773 to Ephraim Abraham, Jacob Cohen, and Joseph Solomon Cohen; and in 1775 to Lyon Nathan.³⁹ These men were traders, not settlers or peddlers, but were instrumental in opening trade in western Pennsylvania. They returned to their homes in the East after their trading was completed. Jewish settlers, however, were permanently residing in Pittsburgh by 1800. Kohler mentions at least one visitor to Pittsburgh who commented on the presence of Jewish residents in the city. The English actor, Bernard, who, in Pittsburgh in 1800, suggested that there were "natives of every State, besides English, Irish and Scotch, French, German, Dutch, Jews, and Indians."⁴⁰ Several Jews purchased land in the Pittsburgh area following the Revolutionary War, but, as of 1790, none resided there. Apparently the Jews to whom Bernard refers were either persons who settled in Pittsburgh between 1790 and 1800, or were Jewish immigrants, passing through enroute to the West. Feldman devotes little research to the Jewish peddler in the Pittsburgh area. He comments only that they passed through the city occasionally; "it is unknown how they fared or if any of them settled here."⁴¹

Solomon Schoyer, born in Germany in 1795, arrived in Pittsburgh between 1824 and 1832. He may have been a peddler himself, but upon arrival in

³⁹ Pennsylvania Archives, 5th Series, I, pp. 374-79.

⁴⁰ Kohler, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴¹ Jacob S. Feldman, The Early Migration and Settlement of Jews in Pittsburgh, 1754-1894 (Pittsburgh: United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Council of B'nai B'rith, 1959), p. 6.

Pittsburgh, established a wholesale and retail clothing store.⁴² Glanz confirms that Jewish wholesalers became the suppliers of the Jewish retail-merchants, the peddlers.⁴³ Undoubtedly, Schoyer sold his wholesale goods to German-Jewish peddlers who were passing through Pittsburgh enroute to the West. He spoke German and was the obvious choice as supplier to the immigrant German-Jew who had not yet mastered the English language.

Cincinnati, however, was the focal point for the German-Jewish peddlers. Pittsburgh, because of the physical characteristics of the surrounding landscape, was unsuitable for large numbers of German-Jewish peddlers.⁴⁴ The population was more centralized around the city of Pittsburgh; peddlers could not successfully compete with the established merchants in the central city. There was no large, scattered population in the rural areas surrounding Pittsburgh and transportation facilities in the back country were poor or non-existent (see Figure 5). Few Jews, in fact, settled in the Pittsburgh area until the mass migration of the 1840's. A Minyan (a group of ten men required to conduct services in a synagogue) was not possible until 1848 when Congregation Shaare Shamayim was founded.⁴⁵ Cincinnati, on the other hand, could boast of possessing

⁴²Ibid., p. 9.

⁴³Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 124.

⁴⁴Most of the Jewish supply houses in Pittsburgh closed within a few years of opening; their owners moving farther west. Feldman (1959) names only two Jewish peddlers in Pittsburgh in 1850.

⁴⁵Feldman, op. cit., p. 14; Julia Miller, "Jews Connected with the History of Pittsburgh, 1749-1865," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1930), p. 24.

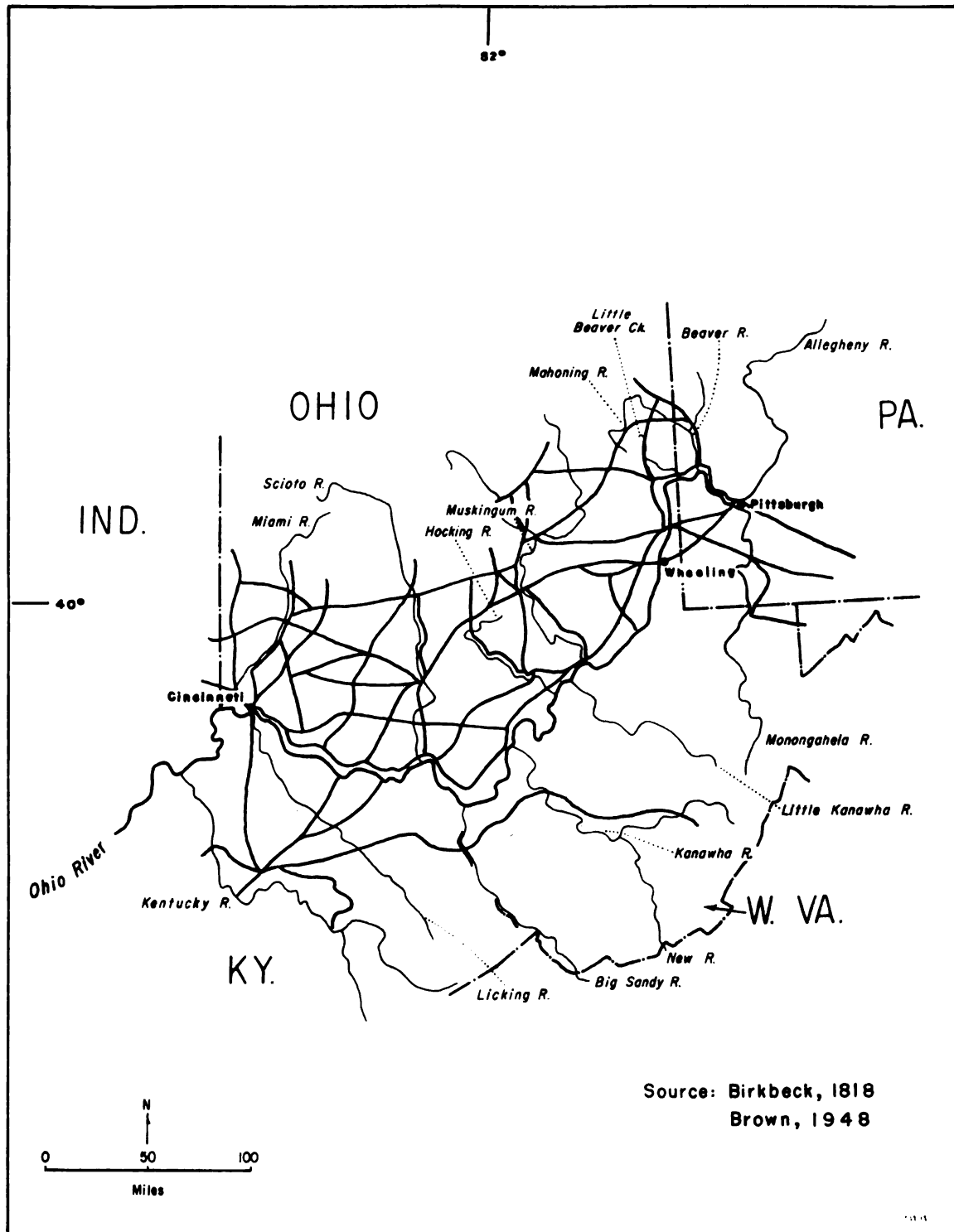


FIGURE 5.

ROADS OF THE 1820's

a synagogue in 1822.⁴⁶ Few Germans were settling in the Pittsburgh area during the study period to provide customers for the German-Jewish immigrant who could speak only German. The goal of the peddlers was, from the beginning, the Ohio Valley.

The Jewish migration into the Mahoning Valley (see Figure 1), according to Butler, commenced in the 1830's.⁴⁷ However, it undoubtedly began earlier with German-Jewish peddlers entering the area. They were assimilated into the Gentile culture only to be overlooked by Butler and other researchers.

Many German-Jewish immigrants reached the Ohio by way of the National Road. They peddled across Pennsylvania from Philadelphia to Wheeling, on the Ohio River.⁴⁸ Upon completion of the Ohio and Erie Canal in 1833, numerous German-Jewish immigrants began to enter the Ohio Valley by way of the Erie Canal and Lake Erie to Cleveland. From Cleveland they moved by way of the Ohio and Erie Canal to Portsmouth on the Ohio River (Figure 6). Both these routes bypassed Pittsburgh, placing the German-Jewish immigrant directly into the heart of the Upper Ohio Valley, his goal. Future success for the German-Jew was to be found in the Ohio Valley. He took the shortest, or least expensive, route to reach it. Jacob

⁴⁶ A congregation was founded in New Orleans, the southern port of entry for German-Jews, in 1826, twenty-two years before the founding of the synagogue in Pittsburgh.

⁴⁷ Joseph G. Butler, Jr., History of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, Ohio (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1921), p. 322.

⁴⁸ The National Road was completed and open to traffic as far as Wheeling, Virginia in 1818.

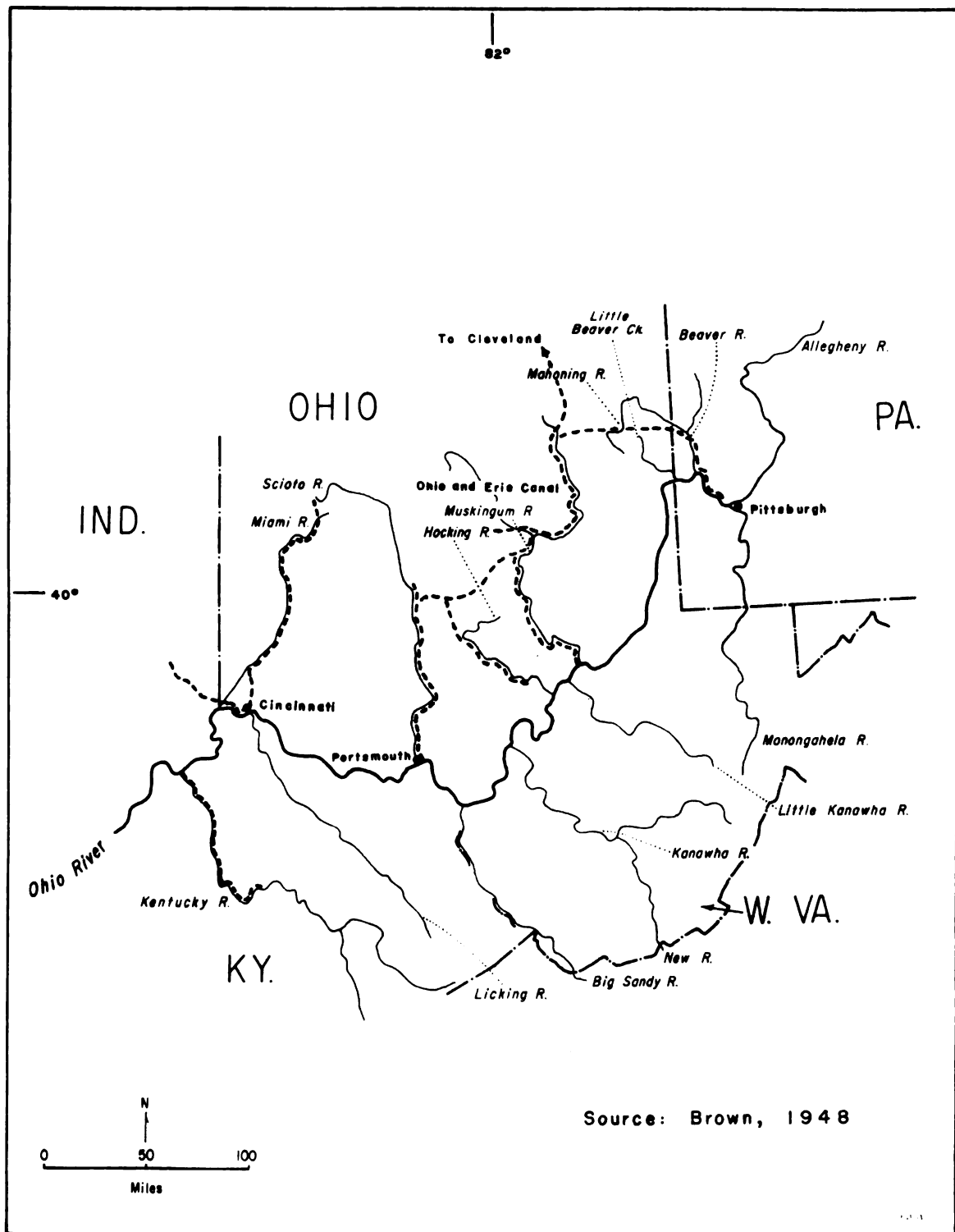


FIGURE 6.

CANALS AND CANALIZED RIVERS

"Süssengut, for example, arrived in New York, July 21, 1837. He traveled westward along the Erie Canal, peddling by day, traveling by boat at night. He reached Chillicothe, Ohio in September of 1837.⁴⁹ Marcus Fechheimer, born July 13, 1818 in Mitwitz, Bavaria arrived in New York in the spring of 1837. He peddled through New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, arriving in Cincinnati in December of 1839.⁵⁰ Bernheim states; "thus . . . these hardy pioneers either as peddlers, or as store keepers, scattered [themselves] along the shores of the . . . Ohio,"⁵¹ and its navigable tributaries. The German-Jewish peddlers, because of their inability to speak the English language, migrated by the shortest possible routes to the Ohio Valley where they could begin their careers amid persons with whom they could converse.

The Life of the German-Jewish Peddler

Charles Peters, an ex-peddler, sums up a German-Jewish peddler's career in his "four degrees of business."⁵² These were; "1st, 'Mit a pack on his back;' 2nd, 'Mit a horse and wagon;' 3rd, 'Mit a store;' 4th, 'Mit a bank or bankrupt.'"

Cramer comments on the existence of 104 settlements in the Upper Ohio

⁴⁹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 127 citing Der Deutsche Pionier, vol. XVI, Cincinnati, 1884-85, p. 518.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 127-28 citing Der Deutsche Pionier, vol. XIII (1881-82), p. 501.

⁵¹Bernheim, The Settlement of Jews in the Lower Ohio Valley, p. 15.

⁵²Charles Peters, The Autobiography of Charles Peters (Sacramento: n.p., n.d.), p. 138.

Valley in 1811 (see Figure 7).⁵³ Undoubtedly there were others; Cramer does not state his criteria for the designation of a settlement. There were, to be sure, innumerable hamlets and isolated farms scattered throughout the region. Peddlers were likely to be found in all of these settlements, either as temporary residents peddling in the surrounding rural area, or settling in permanently established stores.

But what was the life of the peddler like? He had left his homeland, family and friends. He was in a strange wilderness. He did not know the language of the natives. He had been a devout and observant Jew at home in Germany, but he could find few co-religionists in the vast territory he was now situated in. He was forced to disobey the teachings and doctrines of his religion and peddle on the Sabbath. He was obliged, from sheer hunger, to eat non-kosher food offered to him by sympathetic farmers. Americans in this region, even as late as 1915, were offering fine meals of pork to passing Jewish peddlers.⁵⁴

The peddlers traveled through the region during all seasons and in all kinds of weather. However, they preferred the winter months when their customers would be found indoors. The peddler's wares took on a different, fascinating appearance when the peddler opened his pack and spread his goods across the floor. They were more attractive when put on display in the drab, low cabin; on the rough wooden table, or across the dirt or

⁵³Zadok Cramer, The Navigator (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear, and Elshbaum, 1814); Reprinted Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.

⁵⁴Letter from Lucille (Mynhier) Evans, Fort Meade, Florida, April 16, 1972.

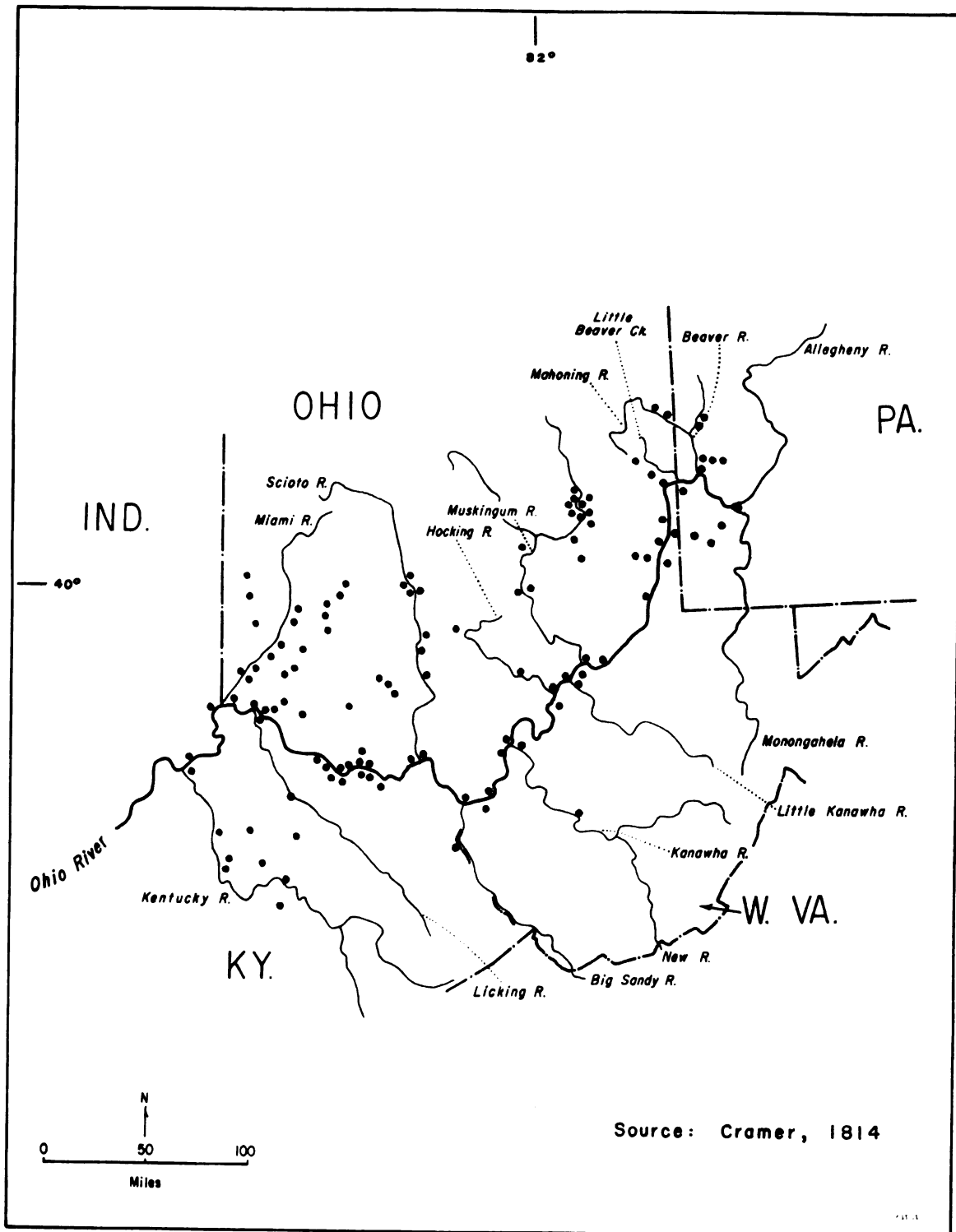


FIGURE 7.
SETTLEMENTS, 1811

wooden floor, amid the homely, drab surroundings of the pioneer cabin. The customers saw the peddler's wares before their eyes. There were many things that they could make use of, but would easily forget to purchase in the village store. The peddler was able to remind them of the little articles that they needed in their daily lives.⁵⁵ Rural America was in need of small articles of every description and the German-Jewish peddler was prepared to supply them. The peddlers normally talked to the women of the household, however, so they specialized in those items that the women could use; ready-made clothing, dry goods (pillow shams and pillow cases, ribbons, lace, bows, and so on), and notions (buttons, pins, needles, thread, etc.).

The peddlers were, indeed, successful. Jacob Süssengut, the twenty-three year old Bavarian mentioned earlier, tramped throughout the area around Chillicothe, Ross County, Ohio. He was successful in his venture and eventually graduated to a horse and wagon. He later anglicized his name to Jacob Seasingood.⁵⁶ Philip Heidelberg, another Bavarian Jew, arrived in Cincinnati in the spring of 1837 after peddling across the country from New York, his port of entry. Aided by a fellow Jew in New York, he invested his eight dollars in peddler's supplies and within three months had raised a capital of \$150.00. He peddled in the vicinity of Cincinnati and eventually entered into a partnership with Jacob

⁵⁵Glans, "Source Materials," p. 130 citing W.C. Friedrich, Gerstaecker's Gesammelte Schriften, (Jena 1872-74), vol x, p. 196.

⁵⁶Whiteman, op. cit., p. 312.

Seasongood in a dry goods store in 1840.⁵⁷ Jacob Elsas, at the age of twenty, arrived in New York from Germany. He made his way to Philadelphia and Jacob Steiner's peddlers' supply house. He was given goods on credit and began his career as a peddler. He peddled westward to the Upper Ohio Valley, liked it, and settled in Portsmouth, Scioto County, Ohio.⁵⁸

After the War of 1812, settlers streamed westward in great numbers. They filtered across the countryside where a scattered population formed, making the early establishment of general stores unprofitable. Whatever the family could not produce itself in the home, or the little frills that kept them in contact with the advanced economy of the East, were obtained from river-boat peddlers.⁵⁹ As roads were constructed, peddlers left the rivers and wandered from settlement to settlement. Thus the settler was freed from his isolation. Glanz indicates that "the settler became connected with other sections of the American economic life by his contact with trade and goods; he was able to avoid working in home-industry and could greatly increase his activities in agriculture . . ."⁶⁰ It is extremely doubtful, however, that a peddler, carrying his wares in a pack on his back, could have brought enough merchandise to the isolated farmer to accomplish so impressive a feat. The peddler, nevertheless, brought a little of the outside world to the isolated settler. The immigrant settler was able to keep in closer contact with the world he had left through the medium of the German-Jewish peddler.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 312-13.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," p. 121.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 122.

Peddler supply houses were established at selected points throughout the region, particularly in the Ohio River towns. They provided goods and services for the German-Jewish peddlers. The owner of the general store, many miles from his supply house, made only one or two trips each year to obtain his stock. The peddler on an established route could obtain an item for a housewife within a month or less. He could take the order on one peddling trip and supply the item on the following trip. The peddlers also had an advantage over the general stores in that they catered to the German immigrants, "with whose peculiar tastes and needs he was familiar from the homeland."⁶¹

The standard stock in trade of the German-Jewish peddlers, as mentioned above, were notions, dry goods and ready-made clothing.⁶² The goods were relatively light in weight, offering the peddler the opportunity to carry a larger number of items. The peddler could not afford to carry only a few items. He would be traveling for days at a time over long distances. He needed a large number of lightweight, high value products to make his peddling journeys profitable. It is doubtful that the German-Jewish peddler, particularly the foot peddler, carried items which were essential to the livelihood of the isolated farmer. Few items in that category would meet the peddler's requirements. Peddlers' wares were, for the most part, items which would be considered luxuries by the pioneer settler. They were items which brightened his life and kept him in contact with

⁶¹Ibid., p. 123.

⁶²Marous, Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865, p. 6; and Whiteman, op. cit.

the styles and fashions of the East. They were not the necessities of life.

The first method of peddling was, of course, on foot. The poverty stricken immigrant was by no means able to purchase a horse upon arrival in the United States. He followed the primitive roads and towpaths along the rivers of interior America (see Figures 5 and 6). The pack on his back seldom weighed less than forty pounds, frequently as much as 100-150 pounds. He normally traveled as many as twenty-five miles a day.⁶³

The German-Jewish peddler was the fashion advisor of the day. "He knew all the latest styles [or at least carried the products which could be passed off as being the latest styles] . . . as soon as he opened his pack he began a running record of the newest changes in fashion [if, of course, he knew English]."⁶⁴

The peddler stopped at nearly every house on his route. He only avoided those where he was certain that he would be unwelcome. If he was allowed to open his pack, he was usually successful in making a sale. Once the pack was opened, it was difficult for the isolated settler to resist the items before him. The peddler normally left the farmhouse with his pack lightened and his money purse heavier. "In time housewives began to expect the monthly visit from the cheerful, young Jewish peddler."⁶⁵

⁶³See Figure 4 for a picture of a German-Jewish peddler who, from all indications, is, in appearance, typical of all the German-Jewish foot peddlers of the period 1790-1840.

⁶⁴Rudolf Glanz, The Jew in the Old American Folklore (New York: Waldon Press, 1961), p. 137 citing G. Estes, The Stagecoach (Cedarwood, Oregon, 1925), p. 162.

⁶⁵Friedman, op. cit., p. 4.

The bearded Hebrew frequently brought news of the outside world, if he could speak English. He was, needless to say, welcomed in most frontier households and helped improve the American system of communication and distribution by personal contact.⁶⁶

The German-Jewish peddlers were scattered throughout the region in relatively large numbers and are frequently mentioned in travel accounts.⁶⁷ James L. Scott "called at a German tavern [at Ashland, Richland County (now in Ashland County), Ohio], as the next day was Sabbath . . . during the day, a German peddler, a Jew, came, . . ."⁶⁸ Luke Shortfield tells of an encounter with a German peddler, "a cunning Jew,"⁶⁹ whom he calls, "Moses, the Jew."⁷⁰ Hyman Lazarus appears to have operated out of Marietta, Washington County, Ohio. The Sheneman peddler, who, unfortunately, remains anonymous, worked from a supply base in Wooster, Wayne County, Ohio. "Eleven times out of ten the peddler is a Jew, . . ."⁷¹

The successful peddler, after graduating to a horse and wagon, rapidly expanded his business to include a wider assortment of products; adding

⁶⁶Hirshler, op. cit., p. 38.

⁶⁷There were 311 peddlers, most of whom were German-Jews, in Cincinnati alone in 1840; many others were located throughout the Upper Ohio Valley. See Charles Cist, Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851 (Cincinnati: William E. Moore and Co., 1851), p. 19.

⁶⁸James Leander Scott, A Journal of a Missionary Tour, through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan (Providence: By the author, 1843), p. 19.

⁶⁹Shortfield, op. cit., p. 128.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 130.

⁷¹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 133 citing Theodor Griesinger, Lebende Bilder aus Amerika, p. 20.

tin and copper ware, taking items in trade instead of insisting on cash; offering goods on credit to his established customers; expanding his peddling area; becoming a true itinerant merchant rather than just a foot peddler. Many continued to travel by riverboat. License fees were not applicable to peddling from boats, as illustrated in the following: "And did you make anything out of the deckers [the other passengers on the riverboat/?" "Te Goots I salt on te bassage, . . . gost me vorty tollar - dey prought me von huntret and tirty. My business is to pe always at pusiness, everywhere. On te steamboats dey ton't make us bay lizenze."⁷²

The Sheneman peddler was one of the more successful merchants who traveled about in a horse and wagon. He sold a variety of items; pails at twenty-five cents each, flaxseed at one dollar a bushel, rags at a variety of prices, tubs, ranging in price from one to three dollars, depending on size, peaches, which he received in trade, only to re-sell at a profit, apples, feathers, deer skins, tallow, cheese, mops, and butter.⁷³ On January 7, 1836, after eleven days of peddling, he states in his diary, "finish Sold All and returned."⁷⁴

The route traveled by the Sheneman peddler began at his supply base in Wooster, Wayne County, Ohio, proceeded southeast to New Bedford, south to Keene Town (now called Keene) and west to Danville where his supplies became exhausted.⁷⁵ He returned to Wooster to replenish his stock, then

⁷²Shortfield, op. cit., p. 183.

⁷³Peddler's Diary, Western Michigan University, Archives, John Sheneman Papers.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁵Ibid.

ventured out on the route illustrated in Figure 8. He did not comment on length of time it required to complete the second circuit. However, he carried a much larger supply of goods and a greater variety of items on the second journey than he had on the first. The second journey, during which his supplies became exhausted in the vicinity of Loudonville, was approximately seventy-five miles in length. This was probably the maximum distance a wagon-peddler was able to travel before depletion of his stock. He never traveled more than thirty miles from his base of supply in Wooster, however. If he misjudged his business prospects, selling his stock of goods before completing the circuit, he would be certain of having no more than thirty miles to travel in returning to his supply base. The majority of his customers resided in rural areas, although he does comment occasionally that a few of his patrons were within some of the small villages along his route.

The Sheneman peddler was typical of the advanced wagon-peddler. He extended credit to his customers, "Hector Shutt . . . and bill 50 [cents];"⁷⁶ received goods in payment rather than insisting on cash, and sold a wide variety of items. His expenses on the second journey, other than the cost of the goods and his horse and wagon, totalled "12¢ to blacksmith"⁷⁷ and "Blacksmith bill 25 [cents]."⁷⁸ He expected to receive exact amounts in payment, if his customer paid cash. He kept

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 11.

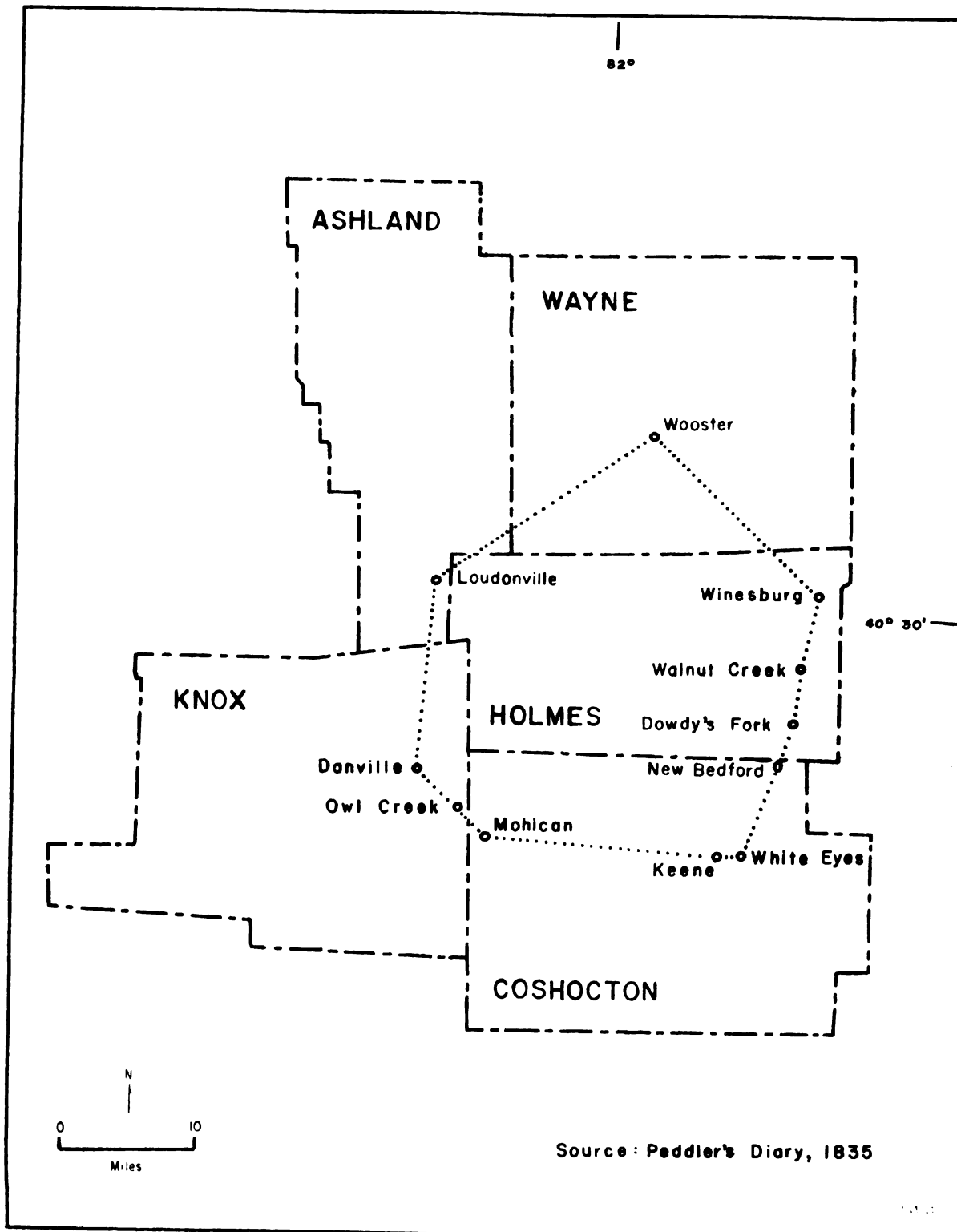


FIGURE 8.

PEDDLER'S ROUTE, 1835

a careful record of the amount of money received from each customer and of the amount he paid out in change. "50 cents I gave change;"⁷⁹ and "I gave 6¼ change;"⁸⁰ are two such entries in his diary.

Dangers abounded on the road. One account tells of a German-Jewish peddler being attacked by a man who was returning from a camp meeting. His explanation was that he had heard "that the Jews had crucified the Lord, and I calkerlated you was one of the men that did it."⁸¹ Many local areas enacted laws regarding the activities of peddlers, often at the insistence of a local merchant. Many an unsuspecting German-Jewish peddler found himself in the unfriendly hands of the local constable before he knew anything about the existence of the law. Frequently their foreign appearance made them the butt of jokes and rough treatment in the village inns where they were occasionally obliged to stay overnight. Friedman adds, too, that "only too often [local newspapers had to report] the robbery, or sometimes the murder of a Jew peddler."⁸² Indeed, they were murdered. A letter, written in 1836, contains the following:

Perhaps you recollect a Jew pedler was missing two or three years ago near the free bridge of Cayuga lake his horse and trunk was found where he put up for the night but nothing could be found of the man. (in that time search was made) About ten days ago a man was chopping on the marsh of the lake in the woods and cut down a hollow stump twenty or thirty feet high on the same farm where the peddler was last seen and to his astonishment found it contained the body of a man hung in it with a rope and piece of chain . . . it is said to

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 4.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Glantz, The Jew in the Old American Folklore, p. 135 citing Jewish Ledger, XII (1900), no. 9, p. 15.

⁸²Friedman, op. cit., p. 6.

be the pedler. The farm was sold to another man once the pedler was missed, they have taken one man on suspicion and conveyed him to Auburn and sent for another to Michigan.⁸³

The murder of a German-Jewish peddler occurred in Morgan County, Kentucky during the time that William Mynhier was sheriff. A man by the name of Brown was tried and hanged for the crime. The name of the peddler who was murdered is not recorded.⁸⁴

Friedman summarizes, "on foot, on horseback, or with wagon drawn by a weary horse, over rough roads, fording unbridged streams, they made their slow ways with heavy packs, rain or shine, gaining their meager profits, ever hoping that at the end of the rainbow there was awaiting them sunshine in this new land."⁸⁵

The peddlers' reactions were as could be expected. Jacob Elsas "thought of home and mother and brothers and sisters, and felt indescribably lonesome as he then, for the first time, shed tears."⁸⁶ Abraham Kohn was bitter, "I cannot say whether America misled me, or whether I misled myself."⁸⁷ Many others cursed the day they left home. Sales were not always good; the peddler sometimes thought that, because of his background, he simply was not sharp enough to make a good sale;

⁸³Letter from Polly Ely, Venice, New York, January 6, 1836 to Herman Landon, Jackson County, Michigan.

⁸⁴Letter from Lucille (Mynhier) Evans, Fort Meade, Florida, April 16, 1972.

⁸⁵Friedman, op. cit., p. 6.

⁸⁶Whiteman, op. cit., p. 314.

⁸⁷Marcus, op. cit., p. 7.

I mosht afeart America ish no conetry for the Jewish, no more ash Scotland ish vitch hash notink in it at all put pride ant poverty, ant oatmeal and vishkey. Te Yankee all knowish too mush for us, ant ish too mush wide awake, ant sho sharp as a neetle at making von pargain, vitch give no chansh at all to a poor Jew to liff.⁸⁸

As a peddler became known, and came to know his customers on an established route, he often extended credit. He was frequently forced to make the move in order to compete with the village storekeepers who were his competition. Bad debts, of course, came to plague the peddler who had little chance of forcing payment. Local courts repeatedly refused to force payments from neighbors to pay an itinerant peddler whom they often considered a scoundrel.

A small handful of German-Jewish peddlers enjoyed their chosen profession. Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, at first, liked life in the open, stating that he preferred to be independent and to work out his own salvation in his own way.⁸⁹ Most German-Jewish peddlers, however, were only too happy to save enough to buy a store in some small town where they felt welcome, often omitting the horse and wagon stage of the peddling business. Many peddlers who went through the horse and wagon stage were later sorry for making the move:

I started out with high hopes, but soon discovered that I had made a serious blunder. To carry one's stock of goods boldly into a house and submit it for inspection to the prospective customer is a far easier proposition than to go empty-handed into the house, enumerate the articles which you have for sale, and try to receive permission to show your goods. In the former case a small sale could almost invariably be made, while in the latter procedure much valuable time

⁸⁸Rudolf Glanz, "Jew and Yankee: a Historic Comparison," in Studies in Judaica Americana, p. 334 citing [Thomas Chandler Haliburton], The Letter-bag of the Great Western, or Life in a Steamer (Philadelphia, 1840), p. 143.

⁸⁹Bernheim, The Story of the Bernheim Family, p. 37.

was often lost in the attempt to get the customer into the mood to look at your wares.⁹⁰

Isaac Bernheim soon discovered, much to his grief, that the expense of keeping a horse far exceeded his profit on the goods he was able to sell. The happiest moment in his peddling career, and a turning point in his life, was when he discovered one morning that his horse had died.⁹¹

The German-Jewish peddlers were frequently of the opinion that their suppliers and customers were attempting to take advantage of them. The feeling, in many cases, was mutual. The editor of a Kentucky newspaper classified "pedlars, editors, clockmakers, tirmen, and robbers" as being, for the most part, "men without honor or morality, . . . [here for] the dirty purposes of lucre and wealth."⁹² The editor's attitude was, unfortunately, a common one regarding the German-Jewish peddlers. The peddler quickly earned a reputation for sharpness: "But after all, he was a Jew peddler. It was said facetiously up and down the Big Road that you 'come off better with the black-faced highwayman in a rough and tumble scrap than you would trading with Chake Rosenstein."⁹³ The German-Jewish peddler was frequently made the butt of jokes and anecdotes.⁹⁴ Hyman Lazarus is

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 41.

⁹²James Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture; The Upper Ohio Valley, 1800-1825 (New York: De Capo Press, 1969), p. 39 citing the Frankfort Commentator, March 23, 1820.

⁹³Glanz, The Jew in the Old American Folklore, pp. 136-37 citing G. Estes, The Stagecoach (Cedarwood, Oregon, 1925), p. 160.

⁹⁴For further on this subject, see Rudolf Glanz, The Jew in the Old American Folklore (New York: Waldon Press, 1961), and, by the same author, "Jewish Names in Early American Humor," in Studies in Judaica Americana (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970).

frequently remembered by the stories told regarding his activities:

The first mill in Malta [Ohio] was built by Isaac Baker on two flat-boats . . . It is related that the first time that Hyman Lazarus, the Jew, saw a steamboat on the [Muskingum] River, he came to Baker on the run, his eyes wide with astonishment, and shouted, 'Mr. Baker! Mr. Baker! Your mill haf got loose, und he is coomin oop the river a-grindhin like the Devil!'⁹⁵

Luke Shortfield tells of his first meeting with Moses Tubal:

He came on foot, but from what place no one knew. He was a young man somewhat older than myself, with a prominent nose, high cheek bones, and small sparkling eyes. Before the day was over, I began to suspect he might be one of those vendors of 'tender' goods, a cunning Jew, in quest of a location to cheat his neighbors, and spoil the regular trader's business.⁹⁶

The writer's opinion may have been colored somewhat by the fact that he was, at that time, the only so-called, regular trader, in the village. "Moses, the Jew"⁹⁷ built his store next to Shortfield's, each commencing a private war against the other.

James L. Scott, a protestant minister, was suspicious of the German-Jewish peddler he encountered at Ashland, Ohio: The peddler "was very urgent to direct me. I took his way bill, but his anxiety to obtain my pledge that I follow it, gave me suspicions, and I took another route."⁹⁸ Scott later learned that the route suggested by the peddler traversed forty miles of wilderness, "sometimes infested with robbers."⁹⁹ The German-Jewish peddler, although disliked by merchants and travelers, was

⁹⁵Robertson, op. cit., p. 345.

⁹⁶Shortfield, op. cit., p. 128.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 129.

⁹⁸Scott, op. cit., p. 19.

⁹⁹Ibid.

nearly always a welcome visitor at the isolated farms and villages, even into the present century: "I remember when I was 6 or 8 years old [about 1915] one [a Jewish peddler] stopped at the home of my grandparents. I remember looking in his pack, and wondered how he carried so many things . . . The peddlers were always welcome visitors."¹⁰⁰

Glanz agrees that the peddlers were welcome visitors:

And very soon the peddler appeared not only as the face from home, but as the vision of all that is new and far off; the bearer of the amazing sensational creations of the civilized world, bringing these things to the log cabins in the wilderness and to newly founded points of settlement. In these places, he presents a veritable show with his wares, and thereby embarrasses the settler merchant who is his competitor. In brief, the magical image of the 'bearer of civilization' was aroused in the wilderness.¹⁰¹

During the period 1790-1840 the German-Jewish peddler was frequently the sole contact between the distant settler and the business world."¹⁰²

He brought some of the luxuries of the day which the isolated settler could or would not obtain elsewhere. The dealer of the town was the merchant; the dealer of the sparsely populated countryside was the peddler.¹⁰³

The peddler also aided in the economic development of new towns and cities in the Upper Ohio Valley. The peddlers in the region did not have the resources to purchase their goods directly from New York,

¹⁰⁰Letter from Lucille (Mynhier) Evans, op. cit.; A letter from Ida Kennings, Detroit, Michigan, May 1, 1972 recalls a similar childhood incident in Delaware County, Indiana before 1908.

¹⁰¹Glanz, The Jew in the Old American Folklore, p. 123.

¹⁰²Friedman, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁰³Richardson L. Wright, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1927), p. 94.

Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh, nor did many of them have time to spare to make such a journey to obtain supplies. The peddler had to buy in the next wholesale center, often the small river towns, creating a market for wholesalers who might consider establishing supply houses in the new towns.

The peddlers position in the trade was one of procuring goods for the settlers which could not be profitably stocked by the local merchants in the region. The peddler was the "pioneer-merchant following the pioneer settler."¹⁰⁴ He filled a need in the lives of farmers and villagers who had no ready access to stores which stocked the items which the peddlers carried. The local merchant ran the general store; the German-Jewish peddler was the specialty store. The German-Jew, recently arrived in the United States, was willing to endure the hardships and assume the risks of the peddling profession in order to gain a foothold in his new home.

¹⁰⁴ Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," p. 121.

CHAPTER IV
SETTLEMENT AND ASSIMILATION

Spatial Distribution of the German-Jews

"One becomes a merchant, i.e., carries on trade in the ever-roaming wagons and steamboats, until one gets a house and established store, . . ."¹ One American Jewish periodical claims, ". . . almost every little town [in Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri] has Jewish inhabitants."² This was also true of the region under study, the Upper Ohio Valley. Isaac Bernheim comments that his co-religionists "were found scattered along the Lower Ohio and its tributaries many years before 1850."³ This was also undoubtedly true of the Upper Ohio. The Occident, in discussing the possibility of encouraging German-Jews to form agricultural colonies, states; "The clothing, dry goods, shoe, and liquor, together with the jewelry and rarely the grocery trade are nearly everywhere their sole pursuit."⁴ They were engaged in nearly all forms of business, in nearly every town and village.

Those German-Jews who remained faithful to Judaism looked to the

¹Glanz, "Source Materials," p. 93 citing Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, September 28, 1839, p. 490.

²Deborah, I (1856), p. 270. Abba Eban, My People; The Story of the Jews, p. 303, states that German-Jews settled in almost every new town which was founded in the United States between 1820 and 1860.

³Bernheim, The Settlement of Jews in the Lower Ohio Valley, p. 14.

⁴Occident, XV (1857), p. 277.

city of Cincinnati for spiritual guidance. Although numerous isolated Jews journeyed into Cincinnati occasionally for the holidays,⁵ the city could not act as a permanent binder between the lone Jew and his religion. The isolated German-Jew was making new friends; he could not be expected to journey to Cincinnati every Sabbath to worship. He began, therefore, to attend Christian churches; he joined Christian lodges and organizations. His bonds to Judaism were beginning to crumble. He was rapidly accustoming himself to the non-Jewish culture in which he was situated. He was settling down - and that is what he wanted.

Marcus, in commenting on the mobile merchants, states, "the peddler had no desire to peddle; he wanted to settle down, and when he found a likely spot at a crossroads, a busy county seat, or a bustling river town, he . . . opened a little store."⁶ Marcus continues by pointing out that few villages in the study area did not possess at least one Jewish merchant by 1850.⁷ Rabbi Isaac Leeser, a leader of American Judaism, announced in 1861 that German-Jews "are found in every portion of the Union, . . ."⁸ He continues by stating that German-Jews, in large numbers, were "scattered throughout every state; scarcely a hamlet or a village being found which does not contain at least one

⁵Deborah, I (1856), p. 266; and Grinstein, op. cit., p. 411.

⁶Marcus, Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865, p. 10.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Isaac Leeser, "History of the Jews and their Religion," in Religious Denominations in the United States, edited by Charles DeSilver (Savannah, Ga: John M. Cooper and Co., 1861), p. 317.

family. They are most numerous in Ohio . . ."⁹

Leeser's assumptions were correct. Five years earlier (1856) his Occident published statistics on the number of established congregations in the United States - a good indicator not only of the number of Jews within the urbanized portions of the study area, but also of a proportionate number of isolated Jews scattered between the urbanized areas. Within the study area, only one congregation existed in Pennsylvania - in Pittsburgh. Likewise, only one had been founded in (West) Virginia - at Wheeling. There was only one congregation in all of Kentucky - at Louisville. That city, however, is outside the study area. Ohio, on the other hand, had four congregations in one city, Cincinnati, alone. Other congregations were in Circleville (Pickaway County), Columbus (Franklin County), and Dayton (Montgomery County). The article continues, "there are also many Jews in Zanesville [Muskingum County], . . . and Steubenville [Jefferson County], . . ."¹⁰ Many others were scattered throughout the region, but, because of distance, were isolated and were induced "to forego living in the manner we are commanded in the Bible."¹¹ The German-Jews, then, were scattered in large numbers throughout the region, particularly in Ohio, with the majority residing in rural, rather than urbanized, areas.

⁹Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁰"Congregations," Occident, XIV (1856), pp. 409-10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 411.

Isaac Joseph was, according to the federal population census of 1820, residing in rural Harrison Township, Stark County, Ohio. This township is now located in Carroll County. Moses Levi resided in the city of Chillicothe, a place that has been referred to as, at one time, the center for German-Jewish peddlers in the Upper Ohio Valley, although no congregation was founded there during the study period. Hyman Lazarus, only two years before (1818), opened a store in Morgan County, Ohio:

The first store [in Malta, Morgan County, Ohio] was started in 1818 by Hyman Lazarus, a Jew, who had previously tramped about the country as a peddler. He had a small stock, but sold whiskey, bought ginseng, and made some show of business. He first had his goods in a room in the end of Young's house, but afterward [1819] built a story and a half log house . . . , where he continued in business for many years . . .¹²

The store of Hyman Lazarus is frequently referred to as the "grocery and saloon of Lazarus, the Jew,"¹³ although by 1850 he had ceased being a storekeeper and had become a tailor, following in the footsteps of so many of his compatriots.

The federal population census of 1830 enumerated an increasing number of persons of obviously Jewish origin in Ohio. Moses Levi was still residing in Chillicothe; Hyman Lazarus remained in Malta; Simon Moses had, since 1820, settled in Tuscarawas Township of Coshocton County. Solomon Solomon was in Paint Township, Fayette County; Peter and Reuben Israel were in Richland and Goshen Townships, respectively, in Belmont County. The residence of David Jonas was in Muskingum County; Mordecai Levi was in Brown County and Aaron Moses was in Coshocton County. Nearly

¹²Robertson, op. cit., p. 343.

¹³Mildred M. Porter, Malta, Ohio: Sesquicentennial, 1816-1966 (Malta, Ohio: n.p., 1966), p. 5.

all these individuals lived in small towns or villages of rural Ohio. Other Jews, of course, resided in Cincinnati.

The 1840 federal population census of Ohio indicates that Simon Moses had migrated from Belmont County to Cincinnati, and that David Israel had moved from Cincinnati to rural Clermont County, during the decade of the 1830's. Reuben Israel, however, remained in Belmont County; another of the same name had settled at what is now Caldwell, the county seat of Noble County, in rural eastern Ohio. Daniel Solomon had settled in Holmes County, in the village of Millersburg. Solomon Frank was in Montgomery County; Peter Jacob had found a home in Zanesville, Muskingum County. Hyman Lazarus still resided a few miles to the south of Zanesville, across the Muskingum River from McConnellsville, the county seat of Morgan County. At the village of Chester, in Meigs County, was Abraham Levy.

All, or nearly all, of these individuals were Jewish; isolated Jews who had settled in the small towns and villages in the areas where they had begun their careers in the United States by peddling. Other Jews, of course, lived throughout the region. Many do not possess surnames which are distinctively Jewish, so they cannot be conclusively classified as such. Other Jews anglicized their surnames, adding to the difficulty involved in the classification of their names. We have already discussed the example of Jacob Seasongood.

Because of time limitations, the writer was unable to search the census records for the entire region. The 1820, 1830, and part of the 1840 federal population census schedules for Ohio have been indexed, allowing a more detailed search of the entire state. The small sampling, does, however, suggest that German-Jews did, indeed, reside in rural

areas, in small towns and villages, as well as in Jewish communities in urban areas during the time period of this study.

Assimilation and the Jewish Identity

Assimilation into the Gentile culture of the Upper Ohio Valley was inevitable for many of the German-Jewish peddlers. Judaism, with its congregational form of worship, the requirement that ten male adults be present to hold services in a synagogue, and the strict dietary laws, make it unadaptable to life in an isolated frontier community.

As was discussed in Chapter II, the German-Jewish immigrant was obliged to compromise his religious beliefs immediately upon embarking at Amsterdam, Tommingen, Rotterdam, or whatever city was his port of embarkation from Europe. He simply could not observe the laws of his religion when he was one of only a handful of Jews aboard a ship. Thus, the dietary laws had to be broken during the course of the long journey from Europe; many Jews, for the first time in their lives, ate non-kosher food aboard ship.¹⁴

Peddling, alone, in the wilderness did nothing to strengthen their bond to their religion. "On these peddling trips, they were all forced to accustom themselves to other than Jewish foods; they did not observe the Sabbath, and visited the Christian churches and Christian organizations more and more. The following of this life changed them in many ways."¹⁵ Is it any wonder that American Jewish leaders were becoming

¹⁴Weinryb, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁵Deborah, I (1856), p. 266.

increasingly concerned and urged American Jews to cease encouraging new immigrants to take up the peddling trade? Peddling had come to mean assimilation to them. Abraham Kohn, upon leaving Bavaria, was deeply concerned because he was obligated to travel on Saturday; ". . . for the first time in my life I desecrated the Sabbath . . . , but circumstances left me no choice."¹⁶ He again travels the following Saturday, but this time makes no comment or apology in his diary.¹⁷ He complains once again, however, upon reaching the United States, about not being able to observe the Sabbath. He says that since peddling is done in a Christian environment, "one must profane the holy Sabbath, observing Sunday instead."¹⁸

German-Jews, when migrating into the West, commonly went as individuals. If there were other Jews in the area in which he planned to peddle, he avoided them. Too many peddlers in one area would cut the profits of all of them. If there were other Jews residing in the town in which he settled, and usually there were none, they were normally in insufficient numbers to establish any sort of Jewish community, or found a congregation. As Kohler states, "many were lost track of by the Jewish community forever."¹⁹ Kohler, however, unlike other Jewish scholars, admits that these Jews were, in some small way, important

¹⁶Weinryb, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Max J. Kohler, "Some Jewish Factors in the Settlement of the West," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 16 (1907), p. 23.

to the history of the region; "Accordingly, the fact that relatively few early Jewish pioneer settlers in the West have been identified thus far, in no way indicates that Jews were not frequently western pioneer settlers."²⁰ Another Jewish scholar, however, looks with disdain upon the Jewish immigrant who had left the faith. In reviewing the number of Jews in Louisville, Kentucky in 1831, Dembitz can locate few Jewish names. He does, however, locate three men "named 'Levi,' but of these it is known that they were already half-breeds, and educated as Christians."²¹

As already discussed in Chapter II, one of the principal motives for Jewish emigration from Germany was the restrictive residency and marriage law. As soon as the young Jewish peddler was capable of settling in a small community and opening a store, his next logical move was to find a wife. Dembitz complains that whoever came before 1836 "came singly, found no one to pray with, and, what is more, no one to mate with."²² Inter-marriage was the only avenue open to the young Jews who wanted wives. There were few, if any, potential spouses of the Jewish faith in the Upper Ohio Valley. The German-Jews came as single young men during the period 1790-1840; they had little choice but to take Gentiles as wives. Dembitz agrees, stating that intermarriage of the immigrant German-Jews with the daughters of local residents naturally followed, "and the descendants of the early Jewish settlers of Kentucky [and,

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

²¹Lewis N. Dembitz, "Jewish Beginnings in Kentucky," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, I (1893), p. 100.

²²Ibid., p. 99.

for that matter, of the entire Upper Ohio Valley region/ are known only by their Jewish names . . . "23

The congregation in Cincinnati (1825) writes, in a letter addressed to the Jewish congregation in Charleston, confirming that innumerable Jews were being lost in this country from not being in the neighborhood of a congregation and were being lost to assimilation; "we are well assured that many Jews are lost in this country . . . , they often marry with christians [sic], and their posterity lose the true worship of God forever; . . . "24

Simon Moses, mentioned earlier in this chapter, married a Christian in Coshocton County. His marriage to Ann Shaw took place on June 21, 1825. Hyman Lazarus, the ex-peddler who settled in Morgan County, Ohio married Frances Secord, a Christian, on January 11, 1826. The children of these two unions were either raised from birth as Christians, or eventually lost their Jewish culture and religion later in life. The same occurrence took place in nearly all the families of the small town German-Jewish storekeepers.

Assimilation of the German-Jews into the Gentile culture had been a growing concern to American Jewish leaders for decades. Isaac Leeser, the editor of the Occident, in referring to rules concerning religious observance among Jews in the United States, states that assimilation was rapidly drawing rural Jews away from their religion. There seemed

²³Ibid.

²⁴Reprinted in David Philipson, "The Cincinnati Community in 1825," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, X (1902), p. 98.

to be one set of rules for "those who live in the cities, and another [for example the non-observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws] for pedlars, farmers, planters, and all others 'who live scattered singly or few in numbers in distant or isolated settlement' . . ."25

Other Jewish leaders indicate that the occupations chosen by the German-Jewish immigrants were responsible, indirectly at least, for the assimilation that was occurring; ". . . give honour to yourselves; . . . make yourselves respected, beloved, and avow yourselves as Jews, . . . do this by choosing different and honourable trades and pursuits."26 The author of the article apparently felt that by choosing peddling and the clothing business, the Jews were stereotyping themselves. In order to avoid the stereotype, they ceased admitting that they were Jews.

Anti-semitism occasionally appeared on the American scene, even in the wilderness, particularly among the German settlers.²⁷ The very thing which had driven the German-Jews from their homes in Europe before the 1840's now threatened to reappear in their new homeland. As a result, many Jews attempted to conceal their origin and identity. Luke Shortfield could not understand why Moses Tubal acted as he did in Philadelphia:

²⁵"Some Thoughts on the Editor's 'Thoughts on Union'," Occident, XIII (1855-56), p. 343.

²⁶Isidore Bush, "The Task of the Jews in the United States," Occident, IX (1851-52), p. 471.

²⁷Weinryb, op. cit., p. 123.

He [the wholesaler] made it a rule never to trust western Jews . . . He said that he had supposed Moses was a Jew, although his language and dress were in exact imitation of the thorough-bred western merchant; and upon putting the question to him directly, had forced him to make an affirmative reply; and he then declined selling him anything on credit.²⁸

Had Luke Shortfield not informed the wholesaler of Moses' origin, this incident would probably not have occurred. "All this surprised me," he continues. "Why had Moses attempted to conceal the fact of his being a true Israelite?"²⁹ Why, indeed?

The Occident also concerns itself (1858) with the German-Jews' attempts to conceal their backgrounds; "they try to hide their Jewish identity, but rarely succeed."³⁰ But at least one Jew did succeed:

In the year 1821, . . . a dying man by the name of Benjamin Leib, or Lape, requested that some Jews be called to his bedside. In answer to the summons, two of the young men hastened to the house. He informed them that he had been born a Jew but had married out of the faith; he had not lived as a Jew nor been known as one, but his dying request was to be buried with Jewish rites in a Jewish cemetery. His wish was fulfilled. His descendants are still living in Cincinnati, but have never been identified with Judaism or the Jews. There may have been other instances like this in the recently founded town, of Jews by birth who were not known nor recognized as such, but we possess no knowledge nor record of them.³¹

Most of the Jews who attempted to conceal their identity were apparently doing so out of fear of anti-semitism. The Occident, in an article in 1858, claims that some of the blame for anti-semitism can be placed on

²⁸Shortfield, op. cit., p. 203.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰"Intercourse with Missionaries, No. II," Occident, XVI (1858), p. 467.

³¹David Philipson, "The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, VIII (1900), pp. 43-44.

the German-Jewish peddlers themselves. The prejudice may have been started by a dishonest peddler in the wilderness who had been identified with the Jews, leaving behind an unfavorable impression of all Jews.³² Jewish leaders encouraged the German-Jews in the small towns and rural areas to openly acknowledge their origin.³³ The small town Jews, usually alone in the town in which they resided, thought otherwise.

Many of the American Jewish leaders were overlooking the fact that a large number of the German-Jewish immigrants of the period 1790-1840 had never known a sense of Jewish group life in Germany. They had not known a settled condition in Germany in which they could freely and openly acknowledge their faith, nor had they lived in compact Jewish settlements. They were the products of the small towns and villages. There was no hope of their ever returning to Germany; most had completely cut all ties with the homeland. There was no longer a feeling of association with European Jewry. Weinryb sums up thusly:

The immigrant's loneliness, shock, disorganization, alienation, . . . insecurity and lack of a sense of belonging, may lead to partially contradictory reactions: hopelessness and an unscrupulous drive for achievement, resistance to change and willingness to give up the old ways and mores, clinging to group identity and the urge for assimilation, pride in association with the group back home and the drive to shed all group identity and submerge in the new country.³⁴

The German-Jewish peddler, between 1790 and 1840, chose to submerge.

³²"Intercourse with Missionaries, No. II," op. cit., p. 467.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Weinryb, op. cit., p. 123.

They appreciated the new life and the economic success they had achieved; at the cost of losing their culture. Banta, in summing up the reasons for their decisions to settle in the small towns and villages says:

Not many of these keen youngsters, sad in their experience in the old world, failed to appreciate the virtues of this newest part of the new one. Few indeed were the county seat towns in the Ohio Valley . . . whose public squares were not dominated . . . by a thriving dry goods store owned by a benevolent old Jewish gentleman whose greatest joy lay in standing at its door and greeting the sons and grandsons of the people who had first bought trinkets from his pack a half century before and had taught him that there were really places where most folks didn't care where he came from, if his word was good and his goods were sound.³⁵

The German-Jewish peddlers of the period 1790-1840 simply wanted to be a part of their adopted region and culture. They wanted, for once in their life, to belong.

³⁵Banta, op. cit., p. 279.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Effects of Assimilation

"Many families . . . would perhaps not be pleased to come at last to their original parent, and to find him to have been a poor Jew pedlar."¹ This statement, made in 1858, sums up a feeling which undoubtedly still exists among many descendants of the German-Jewish peddlers. Numerous families are completely unaware of their Jewish background due to the assimilation of their Jewish ancestor.

Frequently the anglicization² of the Jewish immigrant's name has obscured his origin.³ Intermarriage with non-Jews frequently aided in the obliteration of the Jewish heritage of the family. Benjamin Gratz, as an example, a member of the prominent family mentioned earlier, settled in Lexington, Kentucky in 1818. He married Maria Cist, a non-Jew, in 1819. Their children were raised as Christians, inheriting a Gentile, rather than Jewish, culture.⁴ Hyman Lazarus and Frances

¹Occident, XVI (1858), p. 142.

²See Rudolf Glanz, "German-Jewish Names in America," Jewish Social Science Quarterly, XXIII (July, 1961), pp. 143-69 for a detailed analysis of the surnames of the German-Jewish immigrants in the United States.

³The anglicization of names, however, was not as important among the German-Jews as it was among the Polish and Russian Jews who emigrated during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The German-Jew often possessed a surname which was not alien to the American environment, and frequently similar to that of his German neighbors. There was no need for the German-Jew to change his name in that case.

⁴Rosenswaige, op. cit., p. 144.

Secord were married in Morgan County, Ohio in 1819. He, too, married out of his faith. Their marriage produced four children; Caroline, the oldest, was well aware of her Jewish heritage and apparently considered herself Jewish until the time of her marriage to a non-Jew. Persons who, as children, had known her have told the writer that she often spoke of her Jewish background.⁵ Her children, however, were raised as Methodists (see Figure 2). The second daughter of Hyman and Frances Lazarus, Mary Anrilla, married Solomon Kontner, a man who may have been of Jewish origin. This family, too, however, raised the children in the Christian faith. David William Lazarus, the third child, embraced the Lutheran faith,⁶ never returning to his father's religion or culture. Little is known about Peter, the fourth child,⁷ but he, as did his brother David, probably became a follower of Christianity. A pattern here seems clear; assimilation of the German-Jewish immigrant began immediately upon leaving his home in Germany. The first step in the process was non-observance of the Sabbath and Jewish dietary laws, often

⁵Personal interview with Ella (Ankeney) Winchell, Oskaloosa, Iowa in the summer of 1965. Mrs. Winchell also stated that Caroline (Lazarus) Winchell spoke with a German accent, supporting a statement by Rudolf Glanz, "The Immigration of German-Jews up to 1880," p. 99, that "the first generation of German-Jews remained faithful to that tradition [the German language] and saw to it that their children too knew German."

⁶David William Lazarus is buried in a Lutheran cemetery, behind the church he attended nearly all his life - Jerusalem Lutheran Church, near Deavertown, Morgan County, Ohio.

⁷The last record of Peter Lazarus in connection with the family is the 1850 federal population census of Clay Township, Muskingum County, Ohio when he was ten years old. Neither he nor his mother have yet been located in later population censuses. The Secord family Bible tells nothing about him other than his approximate birthdate, the winter of 1839/40.

committed before the emigrant left Germany, later to be reinforced through forced non-observance aboard ship and while peddling. Marriage out of his faith greatly accelerated assimilation. The oldest child learned the religion, culture, and language of the father, acknowledging his heritage until his death. The second child was taught at least a few details of his father's culture and religion, though later both were abandoned. The younger children, as assimilation became complete, were not made fully aware of their heritage, nor were they taught the German language. The Jewish culture has disappeared from the family. They were now Christians, living in a Christian environment.

Further Research

Several obstacles compound the difficulty in any attempt to determine the identity of German-Jewish surnames during the study period. Glanz indicates in his article on Jewish names that numerous German-Jews who emigrated from southern Germany had name-types which they shared with Gentile Germans. "Thus in the first census we find the Joseph group with 24 heads of families, the Aaron group with 101, . . ."⁸ Notwithstanding the fact that many non-Jewish Germans bore similar names, Glanz accepts the notion that a substantial number of these names belong to members of the Jewish faith. Unfortunately, the religious affiliation of the immigrant is rarely identified in the ships passenger lists⁹ and

⁸Glanz, "German-Jewish Names in America," p. 145.

⁹Frequently the Jewish immigrant signed his name on the ship passenger list in Hebrew, thereby confirming his religious faith.

is never identified in the federal population census schedules. Therefore, the researcher is normally left to determine the religious faith of the immigrant from an examination of the surnames alone. The sheer volume of a great many of the records is another obstacle which frequently makes detailed research impossible. Most of the ships passenger lists maintained since 1820 are extant.¹⁰ However, few of these lists are fully indexed, particularly those from the major Atlantic ports.¹¹ Kabor comments on the impossibility of utilizing these lists in his research on the immigrant German-Jews.¹² He states that the passenger lists for those arriving from German continental ports in New York alone, for the period 1848-1855, consist of 2,400 lists, totalling 120,000 pages. This indicates not only the magnitude of later German immigration to the United States, but also the extent of this research source, and the effort that would be involved in any attempt to identify the German-Jewish immigrants. Until more time and effort is devoted to indexing these records, full utilization of these valuable sources of information cannot be made.

¹⁰The passenger arrival lists, in some cases, begin as early as 1798, although most are for the period 1820-1945. There are many gaps. The lists fall into three categories; Customs Passenger Lists, Customs Lists of Aliens, and Immigration Passenger Lists. Most of these records are now deposited in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. For further details regarding the passenger lists, see The National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, Guide to Genealogical Records in the National Archives (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 22-43.

¹¹See National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, List of National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1968 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 38-39.

¹²Kabor, op. cit., p. 15.

Invaluable work has been accomplished by numerous genealogical groups, particularly in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, in the indexing of federal population census schedules,¹³ but, as stated earlier, these records contain no data regarding the religious faiths of the persons enumerated. It was not until 1850 that the federal census enumerators collected information regarding the occupation of the household residents. The majority of the German-Jewish peddlers of the period 1790-1840 had advanced beyond the peddling stage by 1850, thereby minimizing the usefulness of the 1850 federal population census in studying the German-Jews. The 1820 and 1830 census schedules show, however, citizenship, allowing the scholar to determine the identity of the more recent immigrants.¹⁴

A considerable amount of field work, in the absence of other source material, must, then, be carried out in order to accomplish the goal

¹³Ohio Family Historians, 1820 Federal Population Census, Ohio, Index (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Library Foundation, 1964); Ohio Family Historians, 1830 Federal Population Census, Ohio, Index (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Library Foundation, 1964); Cleo G. Wilkens, ed., Index to 1840 Federal Population Census of Ohio, 3 vols (n.p., 1969); Lowell Volkel, An Index to the 1810 Federal Census of Kentucky, 4 vols (Thomson, Ill: Heritage House, 1971); Ohio Family Historians, Index to 1810 Census of Pennsylvania (Cleveland: Bell and Howell Company, 1966); Ruby Wiedeman and Larry Bohannon, eds., Fourth Census of the United States, 1820 Michigan Population Schedules (Huntsville, Ala: Century Enterprises, 1968); Michigan Department of Education, Michigan State Library, card index to the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 Michigan Population Schedules; Indiana State Library, card indexes to the 1820, 1830 and 1850 Indiana Population Schedules.

¹⁴A column was first provided in 1820 which allowed the enumerator to indicate if the person enumerated was an alien. The enumerators often overlooked this column, so care must be exercised when basing research on the information provided.

of identifying the German-Jews in the United States during the period 1790-1840. Particular emphasis must, in this case, be given to the less frequently consulted county records. In Ohio, for example, since it is apparent that this state received the largest proportion of the immigrants, the records of the Courts of the Common Pleas are of particular value. The Minute Book of the Court of the Common Pleas, in most Ohio counties, contains notations regarding the issuance of various types of licenses; for storekeepers, tavern owners, and peddlers. The Minute Books are rarely indexed, necessitating a page by page search in the Minute Books of each Common Pleas Court.

Probate records, particularly petitions of heirs and wills, lend themselves to studies of ethnic backgrounds. Names and residences of heirs are frequently found in these records, aiding the scholar greatly in determining origins. Land records, principally the first purchase of land by a settler (the first grantee deed), often state the previous place of residence of the grantee. Utilization of these records will allow the scholar to trace migrations of individuals and families across the United States.

County histories, although invaluable to some types of research in historical geography,¹⁵ are of little value to most ethnic group studies. They tend to be ethnocentric; written by persons of the dominant culture group concerning their peers. Persons of ethnic origin

¹⁵See Charles F. Kovacik, "A Geographical Analysis of the Foreign-born in Huron, Sanilac and St. Clair Counties of Michigan with Particular Reference to Canadians: 1850-1880" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1970); and Peter W. DeForth, "The Spatial Evolution of the German-American Culture Region in Clinton and Ionia Counties, Michigan" (unpublished Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1970).

are rarely mentioned in other than a derogatory manner.

This writer feels that more studies should be devoted to the ethnic minorities in the United States, with particular emphasis on the historical and regional implications of their introduction into the American culture. No previous research of any kind has been carried out regarding the German-Jews who are the subject of this thesis, although the number of persons in this particular ethnic group has been shown to have been substantial. Jewish scholars have concentrated their efforts on the role of the non-assimilated Jew, and the Jewish community, in the cultural environment of the United States. They have continuously neglected one element of the Jewish culture - those Jews who have been the subject of this study. Non-Jewish scholars have completely overlooked the role of all Jews, assimilated and non-assimilated, in the evolution of our American culture. Ethnic studies, through the medium of historical geography, can be the vehicle for bridging that gap.

Summary and Conclusions

The German-Jews in the United States have been visualized by most scholars and writers as urban dwellers. This study would indicate otherwise.

The German-Jews began to emigrate to the United States in appreciable numbers during the Napoleonic period in Europe. The analysis given in Chapter II suggests that the German-Jews were driven to emigrate by anti-semitism and discriminating taxes. The Jews began to flee the southern German states of Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden in ever-increasing numbers after 1790. The French occupation of southern Germany, by the army of Napoleon, gave the German-Jews an indication of the benefits

they could derive from the possession of citizenship. To be sure, local discrimination against Jews continued to encourage emigration even during the Napoleonic occupation and a steady, although relatively small, movement of Jews out of southern Germany continued. The migration was principally to the United States.

The Edict of 1813 in Bavaria, and the reintroduction of governmental discrimination against Jews throughout southern Germany following the battle of Waterloo in May of 1814, encouraged an even greater annual emigration of Jews. The short period of freer social and political life, which the occupation of the French Army made possible, led to a considerably improved life for the Jews of southern Germany. The years following the battle of Waterloo were filled with increasing persecution of Jews who saw all their hopes collapse in the reactionary period following Napoleon's defeat. Kisch states that "religious hatred, lust for plunder and desire for gain entered into a worthy alliance in order everywhere to threaten the tranquility and safety, yes even the lives of the Jews, . . ."¹⁶

Unlike later mass migrations of German-Jews which were caused primarily by the economic conditions which affected all Europeans, the motives for the pre-1840 emigration were solely to escape anti-semitic laws and repressive social conditions. The motive for emigration, to escape anti-semitism, and the characteristics of the emigrants - poverty stricken, uneducated, young unmarried men, traveling individually - were a combination which spelled eventual assimilation into the alien culture

¹⁶Kisch, op. cit., p. 25.

into which they were migrating.

The German-Jewish immigrants in the United States followed the general movement of population westward into the Trans-Appalachian frontier which, at the time of their arrival, was opening to settlement. The German-Jews were unacceptable to the Sephardic communities in the American port cities and the German-Jews were obliged to follow their Christian German brethren to the western frontier.

The German-Jewish immigrant of the study period immediately chose peddling as his initial career in his new home. The choice was inevitable as the analysis in Chapter III suggests; many had been peddlers in their homeland, peddling required little or no initial investment - an attraction which was irresistible to the impoverished immigrant, peddling required little knowledge of the English language, and there was a desire among the isolated settlers for the items which a foot peddler could profitably carry. The choice of peddling, however, with its requirement for daily work - at the expense of observing the Sabbath - and travel away from the established Jewish communities, took the German-Jew farther from his religion and culture.

The peddlers eventually settled in the small towns and villages of the Upper Ohio Valley, amid physical surroundings with which they had been familiar in Germany and among people they knew. The country store at the cross-roads superseded the peddler's trade. As early as 1853, one writer foresaw the end of peddling:

But the peddler, like every human 'institution' only had 'his day.' The time soon came when he was forced to give way before the march of newfangledness. The country grew densely populated, neighborhoods became thicker, and the smoke from one man's chimney could be seen from another's front-door. People's wants began to be permanent -

they were no longer content with transient or periodical supplies - they demanded something more constant and regular.¹⁷

The ex-peddler could not join a Jewish congregation. The ex-peddler was frequently the only Jew, or one of a mere handful of Jews, in the town. Therefore, a Minyan could not be formed due to the religious requirement that ten male adults were necessary to form one and thereby worship in a synagogue. For religious observance, he was obliged to attend a Christian church. The German-Jewish immigrants of the period 1790-1840 were primarily single males. They had no choice but to marry out of their faith. Their children were raised as Christians and assimilation was complete.

That the Jewish religion with its rituals, dietary laws, and congregational form of worship was unsuited to an individual migration and to an isolated life on the American frontier is unquestionable. The analysis offered in this thesis supports that hypothesis. The process of assimilation began the moment the young German-Jew left his home in southern Germany. The process was completed in his store in the small town in the Upper Ohio Valley where he eventually settled.

Anti-semitism and the desire to be a part of the society in which he lived drove the young Jew out of southern Germany. He was obliged by the conditions of life in steerage to forego observation of the laws of his religion. Peddling on the frontier, alone and among non-Jews, furthered his non-observance of his religion. Settlement and marriage out of his faith completed the process. He was no longer a Jew.

¹⁷Friedman, op. cit., pp. 6-7 citing John Ludlum McConnel, Western Characters or Types of Border Life (New York, 1853), pp. 285-86.

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Figure

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