Building A Home For the Children of Israel:

The Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Digest

In the April 1850 edition of *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate,* Rebecca Gratz, a woman who had already distinguished herself as a philanthropic trailblazer in Philadelphia, issued a forceful appeal to the affluent Jews living in the City of Brotherly Love on behalf of indigent Jewish children. She reminded her co-religionists that any family could be reduced to poverty and that those with means had a religious obligation to provide for the impoverished. Five years later, the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia was created in order to provide the city's Jewish population with an organization that would shelter religiously observant Jewish children and rescue them from the dangers of poverty. The Jewish Foster Home existed from 1855–1950. Over the course of that almost-century, the institution grappled with the realities of the changing vision of the ideal American Jew, led hundreds of Jewish children through times of incredible vulnerability, and supported Jewish families who were unable to fend for themselves.

Despite the importance of its work and the hundreds of children it sheltered, no critical history of the Jewish Foster Home has been written. Attempting to fill that gap, this thesis includes an analysis of specific aspects of the Jewish Foster Home's history. These areas of focus are the evolution of gender roles, the impact of immigration waves, and the influence of Americanization. This thesis examines these subjects at different points of the Jewish Foster Home's timeline, noting and explaining changes in policy and practice. This study attempts to highlight the contributions and stories of some of the hundreds of Jewish individuals who were involved with the Jewish Foster Home.

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Introduction

In the April 1850 edition of *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate,* Rebecca Gratz, a woman who had already distinguished herself as a philanthropic trailblazer in Philadelphia, issued a forceful appeal to the affluent Jews living in the City of Brotherly Love on behalf of indigent Jewish children. She called on her wealthy co-religionists to "remember that your children, or your children's children, may be among the poor of the land who will seek the aid and require the sympathy of their generation; but, above all, forget not that your deeds, and not your wealth, will on the day of judgment lead for you to your God."[1]

Gratz was determined to establish a Jewish orphanage in Philadelphia, and she unquestionably possessed the bona fides one would need to found an institution of this sort. She had been a philanthropic activist from the time she was a young woman. In 1801, the twenty-year-old Gratz founded Philadelphia's first non-sectarian charitable organization: the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances. The following decade, she was one of the founders of the Philadelphia Orphan Asylum, and she served as the asylum's secretary for nearly forty years. Gratz was a woman in her seventies when she set her mind to establishing another orphanage for the city's Jewish children. Her dream of creating such an institution was realized when she and a small group of wealthy Jewish women founded the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia in 1855.

[1] Rebecca Gratz, "A Foster Home," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, April 1850.

The Jewish Foster Home came into existence in order to provide the city's Jewish community with "an institution wherein the orphans or the children of indigent Israelites may be rescued from the evils of ignorance and vice, comfortably provided for, instructed in moral and religious duties and thus prepared to become useful members of society."[2] From its inception, this institution faced an array of challenges that arose as a result of the changing needs and expectations of both the Jewish and general communities. During these shifting circumstances, the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia led hundreds of Jewish children through times of incredible vulnerability, and it supported Jewish families when they were unable to fend for themselves. This institution served the Philadelphia community for almost a century.

Before explaining the methodology of this study, it is prudent to survey the literature on the topic of Jewish childcare institutions. In the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of factors (urbanization, numerous epidemics, mass immigration) led to a dramatic increase in the number of children who were dependent on charity.[3] In response to this increasing need, communities around the country created local institutions to care for these children. Jewish orphanages, like their secular and Christian counterparts, also became more numerous during this period. Scholarship on the history of orphanages in America most often takes the

[2] *Charter*, *Constitution and By-Laws*, *Jewish Foster Home Orphan Asylum*, *Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, Potsdamer & Co., 1875): 5.
[3] Lori Askeland, "Informal Adoption, Apprentices, and Indentured Children in the Colonial era and the New Republic, 1605–1850," in *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lori Askeland (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 9.

form of an analysis of a subset of childcare institutions.[4] One of these focused analyses is Reena Sigman Friedman's *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880–1925.* In her book, Friedman uses the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York, the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia, and the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum to chart the general trends of Jewish orphanages in the United States. *These Are Our Children* is most successful at highlighting the general themes and developments that impacted most if not all Jewish orphanages of the period (for example: the tension between established Jewish communities and recent immigrant families). However, Friedman often includes the Jewish Foster Home in her descriptions of the two, much larger, institutions only later to clarify that the Home's small size meant that some aspects of its history were unique. Therefore, Friedman's *These Are Our Children* is a resource best used when investigating the larger picture of Jewish childcare organizations rather than the specific history of the Jewish Foster Home.

While some of the larger Jewish childcare institutions have been the subject of critical histories,[5] there is relatively little critical scholarship available on individual organizations. More common are "insider" histories written by former staff members and wards of Jewish orphanages. The Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York City,[6] the Hebrew National Orphan Home of New York,[7] and the Jewish

[4] For an example of this type of scholarship, see: Nurith Zmora, *Orphanages Reconsidered: Child Care Institutions in Progressive Era Baltimore* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
[5] For an example of a critical history of a Jewish orphanage, see: Gary Edward Polster, *Inside Looking Out: The Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, 1868–1924* (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1990).
[6] Hyman Bogen, *The Luckiest Orphans: A History of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).
[7] Ira A. Greenberg, Richard G. Safran, and Sam George Arcus, eds., *The Hebrew National Orphan Home: Memories of Orphanage Life* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2001).

Orphans Home of New Orleans[8] are only a few of the institutions whose histories have been written from this kind of insider perspective. Two histories of the Jewish Foster Home have been published, and both fall within this category of internal histories. Reverend Samuel Fleischman was the superintendent of the Home for twenty-two years (1886–1908) and wrote *The History of the Jewish Foster Home And Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia* as part of the Home's fifty-year anniversary celebration in 1905. Jules Doneson[9] lived at the Home for almost thirteen years (1924–1936/7) and, in 1996, published *Deeds of Love: A History of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia—America's First Jewish Orphanage*. Both of these histories have been used in this study as primary documents rather than critical analyses. The strength of both Fleischman and Doneson's accounts is each author's ability to describe the Home as he experienced it. Fleischman provides a strong portrait of the curriculum, values, and practices of the Jewish Foster Home around the turn of the century, when he helmed the school. In his book, Doneson tells the story of the well-established Jewish Foster Home as it coped with a number of serious changes to the Home's internal structure.[10] However, the strength of each author's description of the Home as he knew it must be weighed against the

[8] Joseph Magner, *The Story of the Jewish Orphans Home of New Orleans* (1905).
[9] In 1924, Jules Doneson's father relinquished Jules (then five-years-old) and his sister to the JFH, while Jules' younger brother, Lionel, (who was too young to be admitted to the JFH) was sent to the Hebrew Sheltering Home. In 1929, the three Doneson children were reunited when Lionel was transferred to the Foster Home. Doneson left the JFH when he turned eighteen. In 1941, Doneson enlisted in the U.S. Army and eventually became company commander in the 28th Infantry Division. After undertaking an intelligence mission in Palestine in 1946, Doneson chose to live in the newly created State of Israel. Doneson (known in Israel as Captain Yochanon Danon) graduated from the Officers Training School and was assigned to the 71st Battalion of the Seventh Infantry. Doneson eventually moved to Detroit where he met his wife Ann and created and developed a successful travel agency. In 1996, he published his account of the Jewish Foster Home, *Deeds of Love*. Doneson died on July 23, 2005; he was eighty-six years old.
[10] Doneson witnessed the administration of three superintendents as well as the Jewish Foster Home's merger with the Hebrew Orphans Home (1929).

weakness of both accounts. Both Fleischman and Doneson superimpose a trajectory path onto their presentation of the Home's history—each man choosing his own time at the Home as the period when the institution was most successful. For example, when reporting the history of the Jewish Foster Home, Fleischman glosses over the years when the Home was run by a matron and a female board (rather than a superintendent and a male board) as a period without clear direction or management. Doneson also spends comparatively little space addressing the early years of the institution,[11] choosing instead to focus on the second half of the Home's existence and to highlight the work of the staff members he admits to having admired most. Additionally, both Fleischman's *The History of the Jewish Foster Home* and Doneson's *Deeds of Love* lack any form of citation—making it unclear if the authors made use of institutional records.

Having reviewed the literature available on the topic, it is clear that in spite of the Jewish Foster Home's unquestionably crucial role in the lives of hundreds of Jewish children and their families,[12] a critical history of the Home has never been written. This study attempts to fill this lacuna through an examination of both primary and secondary source materials. This analysis took as its starting point the wealth of information gleaned from the Jewish Foster Home's records, most of which are preserved in The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Then, by broadening its scope to secondary literature, this study was able

[11] Doneson devotes only thirty-nine of his one hundred and seventy-two pages to the history of Home's first fifty years.

[12] The Jewish Foster Home both provided a home for children who had lost both of their parents as well as provided temporary shelter for children whose families were intact but unable to care for them for any number of reasons. In the latter case, those children would often be reclaimed by their families once the circumstances had changed.

to place the Home within larger trends of American and Jewish history. By using this methodological approach, this study attempts to contextualize the history of the Jewish Foster Home in light of the changes in demographics, state and federal law, religious sentiment, and public opinion that took place in America between 1850 and 1950. By tracing the evolving motivations of the Jewish men and women who created, supported, and guided this noteworthy philanthropic organization over the course of a century, this thesis has attempted to use the history of the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia as a case study that sheds light on way Jewish communities have chosen to care for their most vulnerable members .

This analysis of the Jewish Foster Home begins with a broad overview of the history of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum. This survey highlights the contributions of those who founded the Home as well as those who shaped its course over the century it existed. Additionally, this first chapter contextualizes the Home's history by comparing it to the overall history of orphan care in America.

Chapter two focuses on the distinctive role that women played in the founding and operation of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum. It examines the ways in which women's leadership roles in the Home shifted as the institution became more established. This chapter also reconstructs some of the biographical details of the female philanthropists who supported the Home while concomitantly exploring the ties that bound them together. Except for Rebecca Gratz, these women have been largely forgotten by history. This chapter attempts to redress this wrong by exploring their lives, their connections, and their motivations.

Chapter three traces the impact that the massive immigration waves of East European Jews (1880–1910s) had on the evolvement of the Home. Similarly, it investigates how the values and goals of the Home changed as it adapted to better serve the needs of the East European immigrants. The fourth and final chapter considers the goals of the Foster Home's managers and identifies the primary moral and religious values that they intended to instill in their wards.

This study seeks to demonstrate that while the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia was a relatively small institution, its history sheds light on the development of Jewish benevolent work during the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. The story of the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia over the course of its ninety-five year history enriches our understanding of how gender roles and social boundaries influenced the character of social services organizations in America. This study also reveals how the changing perception of immigrants in Philadelphian society shaped the social, economic, and spiritual goals of childrearing for those who served in loco parentis. Finally, this study suggests, based on the Jewish Foster Home's position as one of the earliest Jewish orphanages in the country, the changing status of women in its administration, and the methods it used to prepare immigrant children for their lives in America, that the Jewish Foster Home can and does serve as a nuanced microcosm reflecting nearly a century of Jewish life in America.

Chapter 1: The Jewish Foster Home

The Jewish Foster Home[1] of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was created by socially conscious and religiously motivated women who, when confronted with the desperate poverty of Jewish children in their city, chose to act rather than be indifferent. Their decision to organize themselves in order to address the needs of their community had long-lasting implications. With this decision, these women committed the Jewish community of Philadelphia to almost one hundred years of support for the Jewish Foster Home. Over this near-century, they donated their time, financial resources, and emotional support to the children housed within the Jewish Foster Home. Their determination to assist their co-religionists meant that hundreds of Jewish children were sheltered and educated rather than left to the miseries and dangers of extreme poverty.

The story of the Jewish Foster Home is not as well-known—and the number of children it housed was not as large—as some of the other Jewish orphanages in this country. However, the history of the JFH has important information to offer the students of American Judaism. Crystallized within the JFH's ninety-five years of existence are the seeds of important movements and developments within American Judaism: the role of women in Jewish philanthropic organizations, the response of established German Jewish Americans to their newly arrived East

[1] At different points in the Home's history and for reasons that will be explored throughout this study, those in charge of the institution changed both its name and organizational structure. For ease of reading, this study will refer to the organization as either The Jewish Foster Home (the original name) or simply as "the Home." The organization's later names, The Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum and Foster Home For Hebrew Orphans will only be used when historically appropriate. For reference, the Home's three names have been listed below along with the years in which they were used: 1855–1874 The Jewish Foster Home ("JFH"); 1874–1929 The Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum ("JFHOA"); 1929–1950 The Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans ("FHHO").

European co-religionists, and finally, the hope that with the correct education Jewish children could be full and useful American citizens. The story of the JFH offers insights into the way Jewish communities understood gender, poverty, identity, and childhood. It was a small organization that represented the intersection of hundreds of Jewish lives, the extension of hundreds of Jewish families, and the protection of hundreds of Jewish children. Ultimately, the JFH was the incarnation of one community's desire to provide for the most vulnerable among them.

In the spring of 1850, an article entitled "A Foster Home" appeared in *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate,*[2] signed by anonymous "A Daughter of Israel." In this short but eloquent letter, the writer argued forcefully for the establishment of an organization to help those Jews who lived in poverty.

> Of all the institutions that charity has suggested and liberality is needed for, a Foster Home or Hospital seems most to combine provision for the present and the future requirements of the poor. Some slight efforts have been made, and strong wishes have been expressed, to establish such an institution; but good wishes alone will not avail, or the wants of helpless childhood had ere this found protection, and the pangs of disease been alleviated by the kind hand of brotherly love. The pecuniary means are wanting. Ye who have abundance of God's gifts, ye who are clad in purple, and dwell in

[2] After Rabbi Isaac Leeser founded *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* in 1843, it quickly became the first important Jewish periodical in America. The paper folded less than a year after Leeser's death in 1868.

> palaces, remember that to "open wide thy hand to thy needy brother"[3]
> is the command of that God who hath so blessed your store;
> remember that "the poor shall never cease out of thy land"[4] demands,
> that from your abundance provision shall be made for them...[5]

To this compelling argument was added a lengthy commentary by the editor of *The Occident,* Reverend Isaac Leeser,[6] who concluded by writing,

> Hence, we say, that both from reason and revelation the poor,
> especially the innocent, helpless offspring of the needy, have a claim, a
> paramount claim on the superfluity of the other, better endowed
> portion of mankind; and they may demand, both as men and servants
> of the universal God, that they shall be aided in their hour of distress.[7]

The author of the initial call to action was in fact the influential and dedicated Rebecca Gratz,[8] who has often been labeled as an exemplar of devotion to one's

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[3] Deuteronomy 15:11.
[4] Deuteronomy 15:11.
[5] Rebecca Gratz, "A Foster Home," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (April 1850).
[6] Isaac Leeser was born in Germany in 1806. After immigrating to America in 1824 and educating himself in Jewish traditions, texts, and history, Leeser became the *chazzan* of the Sephardi congregation, *Mikveh Israel*, in Philadelphia. In 1843, he founded the Jewish newspaper, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (for more information on *The Occident*, please see the footnote on the previous page), and he served as the paper's editor for the rest of his life. Leeser was known as a Jewish traditionalist who was committed to *halakhah* (the laws of Jewish observance) but was willing to make some aesthetic accommodations in his practice (for example: giving his sermons in English). He hoped and worked for a united form of American Judaism.
[7] Isaac Leeser's note to Rebecca Gratz, "A Foster Home," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (April 1850).
[8] Rebecca Gratz was born in 1781 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Gratz family was wealthy and wielded considerable influence within both the Jewish and civic communities. Gratz was a passionate advocate for Jewish children and founded the first Jewish Sunday school (The Hebrew Sunday School) as well as multiple orphanages. Gratz was a member of Isaac Leeser's congregation, *Mikveh Israel* and was loyal to a more traditional vision of Judaism. Gratz died in 1867 and was buried in the cemetery of *Mikveh Israel*. She is remembered as a woman whose generosity and passion made her a natural leader of her large extended family and of the Jewish community of Philadelphia.

community. In 1815, Gratz had helped to create The Philadelphia Orphan Society,[9] an organization on whose board she served and for which she would work for decades.[10] It is certain that from her position on the board of The Philadelphia Orphan Society as well as her position of leadership in the Jewish community, Gratz would have seen an increasing need as economic depression and immigration consistently added to the number of children who required aid.[11] In 1850, Gratz became determined to enlist her co-religionists in an effort to support the children of their own faith. Despite the social standing of Gratz and the religious influence of Leeser, it took five years before the Jewish community of Philadelphia was able and willing to take action.

On February 4th 1855, a group of women met at the home of Mrs. Jacob L. (Hannah) Florance and committed themselves to alleviating the suffering of Jewish children in their city. While the reasons for organizing were not recorded (or at least, none of those memories have survived) by any of the founding women, a superintendent[12] of the Jewish Foster Home explained that the women at that first meeting were driven to action by "the sight of Jewish children peddling matches on

[9] The Philadelphia Orphan Society was a non-sectarian group that intended to rescue fatherless children from almshouses. Gratz helped found the society in 1815 and then served as its secretary for decades. After a tragic fire destroyed the Society's Orphan Asylum and killed over twenty-three of the children inside, Gratz and the other board members raised money to rebuild. The Philadelphia Orphan Asylum cared for children continuously from it 1815 founding until its merger with another organization in 1965.
[10] Jewish Women's Archive, "Women of Valor - Rebecca Gratz - Philadelphia Orphan Asylum." http://jwa.org/womenofvalor/gratz/philadelphia-orphan-asylum (accessed October 12, 2013).
[11] Marilyn Irvin Holt, "Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child-Saving, 1851-1929," in *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lori Askeland (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 18.
[12] This superintendent, Samuel Fleischman, wrote a history of the JFH in 1905 in honor of the Home's fifty-year anniversary. It was not a critical study. Fleischman will be introduced more completely later in this chapter.

Chestnut Street."[13] The following week, this same group of women, which described itself as "the Society," created a constitution in which they addressed the purpose of the institution they hoped to establish:

> Deeply impressed with the necessity of providing a home for destitute and unprotected children of Jewish parentage, the ladies of the several congregations have associated to form an institution denominated the Jewish Foster Home, wherein the orphans or the children of indigent Israelites may be rescued from the evils of ignorance and vice, comfortably provided for, instructed in moral and religious duties and thus prepared to become useful members of society.[14]

Spurred by their religious ideals as well as their sense of social responsibility, the women of "the Society" went about the work of creating the institution that would go on to rescue Jewish children from the harsh realities of poverty, desertion, or parental incapacity for the next ninety-five years. Over the course of nearly a century of existence, the Home was at times in the vanguard of changing public opinion, while at other times its managers made changes in reaction to trends that were already extant. The purpose of this chapter is to present an introductory portrait of the Home by placing it within the broader scope of the history of American child welfare. Having established this historical foundation, the subsequent chapters will then present an in depth look at specific elements of the Home's history.

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[13] Samuel M. Fleischman, *The History of The Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Board of Managers, 1905), 11–12.
[14] Ibid., 12.

In the decades preceding the creation of the JFH, the Jewish population of America had increased five times over, until, in 1840, its approximate number stood at 15,000. Twenty years later (and five years after the founding of the JFH) in 1860, there were an estimated 150,000 Jewish men, women, and children living in the United States of America. Between 1820 and 1877, the rate of Jewish immigration to America was around fifteen times that of the general population.[15] It was not only the Jews who arrived en masse during this period, but these same decades also saw an almost unfathomable increase in the general population of the United States. The country's population jumped from 5,308,483 people in 1800 to 23,191,876 people in 1850.[16] Surprisingly, this massive population boom was not matched by a similarly impressive appearance of a large number of new organizations designed to care for dependent children. In fact, only seventy-one orphanages were founded in the country between 1801 and 1850.[17]

Until the second half of the century, orphaned children and children whose parents were unable to care for them were relegated to the local almshouse. The institution of the almshouse can be traced back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws which were instituted in America during the colonial period. This legal system, "… simultaneously imposed strict limits on the movements of poor people and required local governments to collect taxes to support almshouses… which housed poor people of all ages and both genders—usually in cramped, unclean, and crowded

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[15] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 63.
[16] Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data*, *1585–1984*, (Lanham, University Press of America, 1990), 237–239.
[17] Reena Sigman Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880–1925* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press Published by University Press of New England, 1994), 2.

conditions…."[18] In the middle of the nineteenth century, a combination of forces began to slowly change the assumption that the almshouse was the most appropriate place for dependent children. Everything from, "the poverty and breakup of kinship networks resulting from large-scale immigration and urbanization [to multiple and devastating cholera] and yellow fever epidemics…" forced communities to deal with the question of how best to care for these children. In addition to these factors, "… the sentimentalization of the child in the literature of this period and the growing perception of childhood as a time of innocence led to a critique of child abuse and neglect in almshouses."[19]

Even though this shift in the cultural understanding of childhood was evident even in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1875 that any state formally outlawed the placement of children in almshouses. It was the New York legislature that, on April 24, 1875 passed, "AN ACT to provide for the better care of pauper and destitute children."[20] This is what the law declared:

> On and after January first, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, it shall not be lawful for any justice of the peace, police justice or other magistrate to commit any child, over three and under sixteen years of age, as vagrant, truant or disorderly, to any county poor-house of this State, or any county superintendent or overseer of the poor, or other officer, to send any such child as a pauper to any such poor-house for

[18] Lori Askeland, "Informal Adoption, Apprentices, and Indentured Children in the Colonial era and the New Republic, 1605–1850," in *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lori Askeland (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 8.
[19] Ibid., 9.
[20] 1875 N.Y. Laws, Ch. 173, p. 150.

> support or care, unless such child be an unteachable idiot, an epileptic or paralytic, or be otherwise defective, diseased or deformed, so as to render it unfit for family care…. It shall be the duty of the county superintendents of the poor or other proper officers charged with the support and relief of indigent persons of the several counties of this State, in which there are county poor-houses to cause the removal of all children between the age of three and sixteen years old.[21]

While the language used in describing those children who were not protected by this law is socially unacceptable and harsh by modern standards, this new law did represent a huge advance in the protection of thousands of children. The law concludes by establishing the official method of placing those children who had been or would have otherwise been relegated to the local poor-house, "…it shall be the duty of the officer, justice or person placing [the child] to commit such child to an orphan asylum, charitable or other reformatory institution that is governed or controlled by officers or persons of the same religious faith as the parents of such child, as far as practicable."[22] The New York State legislature enacted a law that was based on the same convictions that had driven twenty Jewish women in Philadelphia to create a haven for children of their own faith a full *twenty years* earlier. These convictions were based on the idea that children should not be left to suffer in the bleak and unfeeling environment of the almshouse and that, if possible, the most proper course would be to create a Jewish home for Jewish children.

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

The question of whether it would be best for orphan asylums to be faith-based institutions was part of a larger debate during the nineteenth century over the proper approach to childcare. In particular, Jewish and Catholic groups were very concerned about whether the so-called "non-sectarian asylums" were in actuality missionary institutions whose main goal was to convert their wards to Protestant Christianity.[23] Protestant missionaries were said to have, "focused particular attention on the children of immigrants, who were perceived as being more easily influenced than their parents."[24] Along with leaders in the Catholic community, Jewish women and men went to work creating "separate Jewish asylums for orphaned, deserted, and destitute Jewish children."[25] The founders of these Jewish orphanages were often German Jews from the so-called "uptown' Jewish community [who] feared that growing numbers of dependent Jewish children, who were being raised in public and private 'non-sectarian' institutions, would be lost to the Jewish fold."[26] At the dedication of the fourth and final building used by the JFH on June 17, 1881, Reverend Sabato Morais[27] explained that the fear of losing vulnerable Jewish children to the evangelism of Christian childcare organizations had been and continued to be an important reason for the establishment of a Jewish orphanage. In his account of the event, the onetime

[23] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 4.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 5.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Reverend Sabato Morais was born in Italy in 1823 and served the Bevis Marks congregation in London before becoming the chazzan of Philadelphia's *Mikveh Israel* in 1851. He served that congregation until his death in 1897. Morais is also remembered as one of the founders of the Jewish Theological Seminary and a leader of the emergent Conservative Movement.

superintendent of the JFH, Reverend Samuel Fleischman,[28] recalled that Morais, "…emphasized the fact that the prime motive which actuated the women of Philadelphia in founding the institution was to rear its wards in the Jewish faith…."[29] Speaking after Morais, Dr. Marcus Jastrow also made this purpose explicit:

> Were it not for the purpose of preserving our religious instincts in the hearts of those we are bond to take charge of, we should need no *Jewish* Foster Home, as especially in this, our free country, ample provisions are made for the helpless of all creeds and nationalities. But we are mindful of the law which says: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,"[30] and these whom the Lord has thrown upon our charitable charge are *our* children, whom we must, above all, imbue with the principles of our religion and teach to worship the God of Israel. It is in appreciation of this, our great mission, that the able and zealous managers of our institution have before all selected the best room to dedicate it to the purpose of divine worship... On

[28] Samuel Fleischman never completed an ordination program at any rabbinical seminary. In a note from the September 30, 1878 meeting of the Governors of Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise reported that Mr. Fleischman had withdrawn from school after being offered a position at the Cleveland Orphan Asylum. (Minutes of the Board of Governors, 30 Sept 1878, Hebrew Union College Records, MS-5, box X-545, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.) In his history of the JFH, Fleischman frequently referred to himself with the title "reverend" and made reference to his having "for six years occupied the pulpit of the Akron Congregation (his only charge)…" (Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 104.) Census records for 1880 list him only as a "Governor" (supervisor) of the Jewish Orphan Asylum in Cleveland. (Year: *1870*; Census Place: *St Louis Ward 5, St Louis, Missouri;* Roll: *M593_814*; Page: *839B*; Image: *292*; Family History Library Film: *552313*). Despite the unofficial nature of Fleischman's title, I have chosen to refer to him as the Reverend Samuel Fleischman in this study because that is the way he appears in archival documents related to the JFH. Fleischman served as the superintendent of the JFH from 1886–1908. In 1905, as a part of the fifty-year anniversary of the JFH, Fleischman published a history of the Home. Fleischman's *The History of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum* is best considered as a celebration of the JFH's history, managers, and supporters rather than a scholarly or critical work.

[29] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 36.

[30] Deuteronomy 6:7.

> entering that room, our sacred charges will be impressed with the feeling of holiness, and they will exclaim: 'How awe-inspiring is this place; this is surely nothing else but a house of God, and a gate leading to the heavens of devotion.[31]

This dedication to preserving the Jewish identity of their charges would be a hallmark of the Jewish Foster Home in all of its incarnations. Exactly what "the principals of our religion" actually were will be addressed in chapter four.

In the previous example, the leaders of the JFH seem to have anticipated subsequent public opinion and even changing legislation about the faith requirements of care facilities for orphaned and foster children. In the following example, the Home's managers were caught up in a contemporary social concern—the belief that the city was inherently unhealthy and even a corrupting force for children. The negative perception of city life seems to have been exacerbated by the fact that, "Immigration and economic depressions constantly added to the [number of children requiring aid], and as a singular event, the Civil War exacerbated the problem when war widows, orphans, and dependent children joined the rank of the needy."[32] Deep-seated prejudices against the increasingly numerous immigrants[33] who had begun to fill these established cities seems to have been an unspoken but crucial part of the established community's concern about city life.[34] As the

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[31] Genesis 28:17 as quoted in Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 37–38.
[32] Holt, "Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child-Saving, 1851–1929," 18.
[33] The third chapter of this thesis will examine in detail the way that the JFH responded to the arrival of thousands of East European Jews.
[34] Historian John Higham, in his book *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, explained that the reaction to the recent Jewish immigrants reflected the general American response to all recent East and South European immigrants. Higham wrote that the nativism evident in American society even before the mass immigration waves contributed to the

nineteenth century progressed and more and more children lived in poverty, there were some who argued that, "… the children of the poor would become a generation of criminals and anarchists, who by their sheer numbers, could wreak havoc on the social order."[35]

For some social leaders in highly populated cities in the Northeast, the solution to the problems of living in the perceived miasma of the urban environment was the removal of the children to a country setting: "Urban youngsters could find a new, wholesome life in the homes of agrarian society, which out of charity or the need for farm labor would welcome the opportunity to open their homes."[36] The question of the best location for a home for vulnerable children was often understood in moral and even religious terms, as the anti-urban argument believed strongly that, "Children placed in [these] new surroundings would be physically and spiritually saved from the worst of city life handed out to the poor and abandoned."[37] One year before the creation of the JFH, the New York Children's Aid Society (CAS)[38] was founded, based on the belief that the city was inherently dangerous to young children taken to its logical extreme. In 1854, the staff of the CAS reported that 164 boys and 43 girls had been sent "to homes in the country, or

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general sense that this new immigrant population was, in some fundamental way, dangerous. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism*, *1860–1925* (Rutgers: The State University, 1983), 87–94.

[35] Holt, "Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child-Saving, 1851–1929," 18.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] The New York Children's Aid Society was established in 1853 and continues to serve children in New York City neighborhoods.

to places where they could earn an honest living."[39] The managers of the CAS, "saw the opportunity to marry urban problems with those of rural areas that complained about the lack of workers to adequately build up the country. …This relocation plan, the transportation of youngsters to rural areas, became known as the orphan trains."[40] CAS was not the only organization to follow this model, and, over the course of eighty years, at least 200,000 children and teenagers were sent out of the city to live and work in rural America."[41]

While the managers of the JFH never embraced the strategies of the orphan train movement, the impression that the city was overcrowded and unhealthy can be found repeatedly in the minutes of the managing board's meetings. The population of Philadelphia went from 258,000 in 1840 to 847,000 in 1880.[42] The Jewish population of the city grew from between 1,500 and 1,800 in 1844 to 12,000 in 1880.[43] It was a time of burgeoning growth which no doubt led to many social and communal challenges. It is clear that Philadelphia's urban growth spurred many of the socially concerned men and women who led the JFH. The first instance of this anxiety over the challenges of urbanization and industrialization appears in a visiting committee's report from the first year of the JFH's existence. On July 10, 1855, Miss Emily Phillips and Mrs. David Samuel reported that they had been to the JFH five times over the course of the week, and they recounted what they observed

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[39] *Annual Reports* (1854). Quoted in Marilyn Irvin Holt, "Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child-Saving, 1851–1929," in *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lori Askeland (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 18.
[40] Holt, "Adoption Reform, Orphan Trains, and Child-Saving, 1851–1929," 18.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790–1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 8.
[43] Marcus, *To Count A People*, 193–194.

during their visits. In addition to reporting the happiness they felt upon seeing that the Home was exceedingly clean and neat, the women also write:

> They would call the attention of the ladies to the fact that there are now ten children in the Home, and that the house is very small; the attending Physician thinks it would not be advisable to increase the number of inmates during the Summer months, as there would be danger of making the Home unhealthy by crowding it too much.[44]

Despite this concern, the JFH would move twice more to nearby urban facilities before it finally left the downtown area in 1881 and moved north to a location in Germantown.[45]

The 1881 move to Germantown arose as a result of many considerations (such as the size of the building and its availability for purchase),[46] but chief amongst those motivating factors was the same suspicion that motivated the aforementioned "child rescuers"—namely, that the city itself was not a proper place to raise children, especially children who were vulnerable to the bad influences lurking within the urban setting. In a letter written on October 17, 1880, Dr. Augustus C. Bournonville, the same physician who advised the visiting committee against increasing the number of children living in the Home in 1855, submitted a letter to the board in which he set forth "the advantages of country life from a

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[44] Visiting Committee Report, 10 July 1855, Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS-335/Box 4/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.
[45] The locations of the JFH are listed below along with the dates in which the specific facility was occupied: 1855–1858, 799 North 11th St; 1858–1860, 7th St above Master; 1860–1881, 1431 North 15th St; 1881–1950, 700 Church Lane.
[46] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 25–27.

sanitary and hygienic standpoint."[47] At that very same meeting, a board member read a collection of opinions written by those involved in caring for orphans on a local level as well as those who directed Jewish orphanages in cities across the country, all of which argued that a rural setting was the more favorable option. Despite these concerns about the disadvantages of urban living for the residents of the JFH, there were some on the board of the JFH who did not support the idea of finding a new site for the JFH in a less urbanized location. Mr. Lucian Moss, a JFH board member, argued against a move and "insisted that the institution should remain within easy access of its friends and supporters."[48] However, despite this opposition, the majority of the board (13 to 2) voted in favor of creating a committee which would begin searching for an appropriate site. This committee's work reached its conclusion with the dedication of the new Home on June 17, 1881, in a ceremony that was attended by some three thousand of the JFH's supporters. In some of the speeches given during the proceedings, this popular anti-urban attitude is clearly evident. Mr. Isadore Binswanger, the president of the JFH's Board of Managers was the first to speak on that occasion:

> The Board of Officers have, through their various Committees, faithfully endeavored to procure an eligible site, a healthy location and suitable buildings… [that would ensure] the health, comfort, cleanliness and the physical and mental development of the children.[49]

[47] Ibid., 25.
[48] Ibid., 26.
[49] Ibid., 34.

Binswanger was followed by the solicitor of the JFH, Edward H. Weil, Esq. who praised the work of the JFH's Board:

> You have done… well. You have chosen a site far removed from the impure atmosphere of a city, the second in population and the largest in size on this western world, yet which by means of steam communication, is one that is much more accessible to the members than if it were located in many parts of the built-up portions of our city.

By installing itself in an expansive new building situated in a suburban location that was conveniently accessible to many of the institution's supporters, the JFH demonstrated an awareness of the social conviction that the city was a source of both moral and physical contamination. By moving the JFH to Germantown, the institution's managers ensured that their charges would be more open to the instruction that the teachers, the superintendent, and the matron of the JFH provided. The specific form and goals of this program of education will be addressed fully in chapter four.

Between 1855 and 1950, the face and nature of social work changed considerably. As in the preceding case of the changed preference in institutional location, some of these developments did not affect the fundamental method of caring for abandoned children. But, one change in the approach to childcare impacted the very core of the JFH and other institutions like it. In the nineteenth century, the ideal vision of an orphan asylum was that of a "total institution."[50] This

[50] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 34.

type of orphanage was based on the widely accepted, "…theory, [which was] applied to asylums of all types in this period, … that only in highly structured, disciplined settings, largely cut off from the outside world, could dependent children be shaped into sober, industrious, productive citizens."[51] As one historian noted, in the second half of the nineteenth century,

> "Inmates" of Jewish orphanages, like children in other large "congregate-style" institutions of the time, were subjected to extreme regimentation, harsh discipline, and, at times, dehumanizing treatment… Youngsters housed in these "total institutions" for long periods of time were largely isolated from the outside world, and later found it difficult to adjust to life beyond the institution.[52]

In the Hebrew Orphan Asylum (HOA) of New York City and the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum (CJOA) children were housed in "sterile, barracks-style dormitories, and ate their meals hurriedly and silently."[53] Alumni of the CJOA recalled that the Asylum's eight-foot iron fence[54] and barred windows were a constant reminder of their institutionalized status.[55]

While the JFH reflected the general trend toward the "total institution" model of childcare, its small size significantly lessened its wards' isolation and regimentation. In particular, the JFH was noteworthy in that the children of the Home attended public school and were allowed and encouraged to interact with

[51] Ibid., 34.
[52] Ibid., 37.
[53] Ibid., 38.
[54] Ibid., 47.
[55] Ibid., 38.

children who lived outside of the institution.[56] However, the JFH did demonstrate and rely upon elements of the "total institution" strategy. In his memoir, Jules Doneson, a former ward of the JFH, recalled that,

> Typically, the new arrival at 700 Church Lane[57] had to be scrubbed down, inoculated against communicable diseases, issued clothing, and most important of all—assigned a number. The number given to a ward remained unchanged during the entire stay in the Home, and became the principal means of identification… identifying every stitch of clothing, appearing on the locker, and bulletin board listing all chore, work, and ding room assignments…. Your number, not your name, became your identity, and it was commonplace to hear a supervisor summon or reprimand a child by calling out his number, rarely his name.[58]

Despite the impersonal and apparently cold nature of the admissions process, life in the Home sometimes recast a child's initiation as a positive experience as is evident in Doneson's recollection that, "…in later life for many, the number fondly became something of a nostalgic status symbol, appearing on personalized license plates and elsewhere."[59]

At the turn of the century, the "total institution" came under increasingly fervent criticism. The "directors of child care institutions, including Jewish

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[56] Ibid., 47.
[57] 700 Church Lane was the JFH's final location. It was occupied by the JFH from 1881–1950.
[58] Jules Doneson, *Deeds of Love: A History of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia—America's First Jewish Orphanage* (New York: Vantage Press, 1996), 43.
[59] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 44.

orphanages, found themselves on the defensive and were compelled to adapt their programs to the changing times."[60] In 1909, the ideas circulating in those "changing times" were solidified by the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent and Neglected Children. This conference was convened by President Theodore Roosevelt, and came to represent the Progressive Era's vision of child care. This new philosophy concerning neglected and abandoned children became the central theme of the White House's conference:

> Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the great molding force of mind and character. … As to the children who for sufficient reasons must be removed from their own homes, or who have no homes, it is desirable that, if normal in mind and body and not requiring special training, they should be cared for in families whenever practicable.[61]

Before this pivotal conference, "the institutional and placing-out systems of care for dependent children complemented each other; for example, institutions would often put youngsters up for adoption or boarding homes or apprenticeship positions."[62] This was certainly the case at the JFH, which had placed children in positions of "indenture" since the mid-nineteenth century. The commitment to this "boarding out" process is evident in the December 9th, 1874 report of the JFH's Indenture Committee:

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[60] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 53.
[61] "Letter to the President of the United States Embodying the Conclusions of the Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, 1909" (1909). Quoted in Reena Sigman Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States*, *1880–1925* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press Published by University Press of New England, 1994), 55.
[62] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 56.

> … the duty of this Committee to procure suitable places for the Children when they shall arrive at a proper age are rendered unavailing from the following causes.
>
> Firstly- There being but a few Jewish Artisans. They find it difficult to procure situations amongst their Co-religionists [*sic*] whereby they can observe the Jewish Sabbath.
>
> Secondly- Upon the children reaching the age of sixteen, the Committee deem it essential for their welfare that they should be brought up to some trade whereby they can earn a livelihood. This the committee find [*sic*] difficult to obtain— the employer in most cases unwilling to accede to the demand allowing them to keep their Sabbaths and Holidays—there being sixty five unavailable days during each year… to compensate for this loss of time the Committee have proposed a reduction in wages or overwork but this has signally failed. …The Committee should have the power to place them in such suitable situations, or at such trades as in their judgment, would be for their best interest.[63]

In 1905, this process of "indenture" was still being used by the JFH. This is how a historian of the JFH described the system: "The Indenture Committee is entrusted with the supervision and care of the children placed in situations or learning trades. Suitable homes are found for them, the preference always given to their widowed parent, if conditions and environment are favorable, the board being paid by the

[63] Board of Managers Minutes, 3 February 1875, Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS 335/ box 1/ book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

institution."[64] It is clear that these "indentured" children, while not living at the Home, were still considered to be under the protection and authority of the JFH. The children would visit the Home weekly and were "in constant touch" with the JFH administration. The children would continue to be monitored by the Indenture Committee until they reached adulthood ("the girls at eighteen years, the boys at twenty-one").[65]

In spite of the fact that both the institutional and "boarding out" methods of care were simultaneously employed by individual institutions, as "the foster care movement continued to expand in the early years of the twentieth century, it posed a growing threat to established child care institutions, and the two systems became bitter rivals."[66] Despite the growing public and professional preference for foster care, many Jewish communities were unable to find a sufficient number of Jewish homes to care for their wards.[67] In many ways, this problem reflected the obstacles that the JFH's "Indenture Committee" reported in 1874. Its goal of finding every Jewish child an appropriate, safe, and religiously sound placement was difficult if not impossible to achieve. Ultimately, orphan asylums were increasingly seen as an outmoded approach to dealing with children who did not have parents to care for them. Social workers began to envision a new approach to foster care that would hopefully replace the orphanage system.[68] In light of this changing vision of orphanages, the administrators of the JFH and other similar institutions worked to

[64] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 93.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 56.
[67] Ibid., 66–67.
[68] Ibid., 67.

ensure that their institutions better reflected the values of the Progressive Era. They focused their efforts on "replacing the previous emphasis on obedience, discipline, and respect for authority with a more homelike environment and a more individualized casework approach toward the youngsters themselves."[69]

As the twentieth century progressed, Jewish orphanages, like many other orphan asylums in the United States, became less and less necessary in their respective communities. Changing perceptions of poverty and dependence led social workers and child welfare advocates to keep children with their families if at all possible. Additionally, increasing numbers of impoverished women chose to apply for the newly available state-funded mother's pensions so that they could keep their children at home.[70] These developments as well as the diminishing numbers of Jewish immigrants meant that there were fewer families forced to turn their children over to an institution.[71] Interrupting the general downturn of the orphanage system, the Great Depression once again filled asylums as "hundreds of thousands of homeless children were set adrift to search for work and shelter."[72] In the 1930s, after sheltering thousands of children during the economic devastation of the Depression, orphanages, which had in many cases severely depleted their financial foundation in order to care for the influx of children, were once again faced with the prevailing preference of social workers toward home based foster care.[73]

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[69] Ibid., 71.
[70] Dianne Creagh, "Science, Social Work, and Bureaucracy: Cautious Developments in Adoption and Foster Care," in *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lori Askeland (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 32–33.
[71] Friedman, 189.
[72] Creagh, "Science, Social Work, and Bureaucracy: Cautious Developments in Adoption and Foster Care," 33.
[73] Ibid.

This general shift away from institutional care for children was also apparent in Jewish communities—some of which moved from using foster care as their preferred method of care to relying exclusively on the foster placement system in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[74]

Another factor that led to the decline of Jewish orphanages was the trend toward consolidating local Jewish childcare organizations.[75] This centralization of Jewish organizations that cared for dependent children brought about the last chapter of the JFH's story. In 1941, the JFH (then known as the Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans) merged with a number of other Jewish children's organizations to become the Association for Jewish Children. The timing and reasons for the dissolution of the Jewish Foster Home perfectly reflected the changing nature of child welfare work in America. On January 23, 1950, the superintendent of the JFH, who had concomitantly been serving as the head of the Association of Jewish Children, resigned, and, over the course of that year, the few children who were still at the Home were transferred from the home.[76] By closing at that time and in that way, the JFH became one "many of the Jewish orphanages, which had been vital components of their respective Jewish communities [but had ultimately been] phased out."[77]

Over the course of its ninety-five years, the Jewish Foster Home was a source of pride for the Philadelphia Jewish community. It provided a home and care for hundreds of Jewish boys and girls while offering the fortunate of the community the

[74] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 188.
[75] Ibid., 187.
[76] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 132.
[77] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 190.

opportunity to invest both monetarily and personally in the support and guidance of these children. Within the record books and files of the JFH, there is the story of the transformation of both American Judaism as well as of the social changes that were influencing the character of American society. In the following chapters, aspects of those extraordinary transformations will be highlighted and examined in greater detail. This interpretive analysis will show that the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was not only an impressive institution dedicated to the care of Jewish youth, but was also a nuanced microcosm of American Judaism, offering contemporary scholars a lens through which to study the American Jewish experience.

Chapter 2: The Daughters of Israel

Rather than attempting an all-encompassing account of every woman's involvement in the Jewish Foster Home, this chapter will focus on the period when the governance of the Home was entirely in the hands of women—from the JFH's founding in 1855 until the Home's administration was restructured in 1874. For these nineteen years, a board of women controlled the JFH and exerted genuine influence over the day-to-day program. This leadership was complemented by the supervision of a matron who lived within the Home and acted as a foster mother to all of the children. By examining this specific period of time, it will be possible to provide a more detailed understanding of how the women who founded the Home effectively shaped the identity of the institution during the early years of its existence.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive portrait of American women during the last half of the nineteenth century. There was, of course, no single, archetypical form of American womanhood. Race, socioeconomic status, location, immigration status— these were the factors that shaped the way in which American women participated in their respective communities. However, despite the wide diversity of women's experiences, it is possible to offer some broad generalizations concerning the social life of a typical, middle-class woman living in the Northeast during this period. In this region of the country, more specifically, in the towns and cities in this region, women's lives changed drastically over the course of the nineteenth century. As the large metropolitan areas continued to grow as a result of industrialization, their vibrancy as major commercial centers

increased concomitantly. "The business of business took middle-class men away from their homes, leaving women alone in them," historians have noted. "Women of the middle class were isolated from the world of men and commerce."[1] Urban industrialization provoked a notable shift of both men and women away from the traditional agricultural family structure (a structure which would continue to be normative for rural families throughout the course of the nineteenth century).[2] As women became increasingly cut off from the economic arena, their roles as wives and mothers received increasing cultural significance. "Home and family became the emotional receptacle for all the sentimental values and feelings middle-class men increasingly felt inhibited from showing."[3] The shifting cultural understanding of the home and a woman's role within it was emphasized and exploited by contemporary literature.

> Male and female authors wrote at length on what they called "man's sphere" and "woman's sphere." An entire theory of human personality evolved, based on the belief that men and women were polar opposites, two separate branches of humankind with opposing characteristics. In the 1800s the attributes shared by both sexes were [deemphasized]. Qualities of mind and character were seen as applying to one sex or the other—almost never to both.[4]

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[1] Carol Hymowitz and Michaele Weissman, *A History of Women in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), 64.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 65.
[4] Ibid., 66.

In the women's magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*, women read that "true [women were] 'delicate and timid'; 'required protection'; 'possessed a sweet dependency'; '[were] above all things modest' and had 'charming and insinuating manners.'"[5] These new societal expectations of women quickly became widespread and resulted in the complete transformation of the term "lady." Whereas in Europe ladies were defined primarily by their birth status, in nineteenth-century America, any woman "who observed the proprieties demanded by woman's sphere" was eligible for the title.[6] With the idea that any woman could become a lady came the understanding that the title could and would be taken away if certain behaviors were not observed. It was only, "so long as a woman acted the part of piety, purity, submission, and domesticity, [that] she was guaranteed the respect of her society."[7]

Jewish women of the developing middle class were influenced by this powerful societal vision of womanhood. Rebecca Gratz,[8] both a leader of local women in Philadelphia as well as a prominent figure within that city's Jewish community, understood that the idea that women were inherently pious could be a tool in the argument for women's increasing involvement with and commitment to the Jewish faith. Gratz feared that without a specifically Jewish understanding of womanhood, middle class Jewish women who wanted to embrace the widespread cultural vision of female piety would be too easily swayed by the missionary efforts

[5] Ibid., 67.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Gratz began her philanthropic career as a young woman, founding the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances, The Hebrew Sunday School Society, and the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. Jules Doneson, *Deeds of Love: A History of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia—America's First Jewish Orphanage* (New York: Vantage Press, 1996), 7.

of contemporary Christians.[9] Gratz embraced this new vision of women's inherent spirituality and worked to channel the energy and resources of Jewish women in Philadelphia as she sought to, "strengthen the religious, educational, and charitable resources" of Philadelphia.[10]

In 1850, the first two pages of the monthly newspaper, the *Occident*, contained a letter signed only by "a Daughter of Israel." That the letter was "anonymous" seems to have reflected the fact that Gratz had "always disliked the ostentation of seeing Ladies [*sic*] names in print when the whole amount of their services are so very small."[11] Despite her decision to mute the impact that her name would have ensured, Gratz's letter was a bold call to action. Specifically, she implored the paper's readers to remember that they must provide aid for both immediate and future needs of their community. "Whilst providing for those who need present aid," she wrote, "it is incumbent on us to lay the foundation for aiding those that will be the poor of the land when we are rendering at the judgment seat of our God an account of the deeds which have marked our career whilst sojourning on earth."[12] The second half of the letter spoke eloquently about the particular need for a refuge for Jewish children:

> Of all the institutions that charity has suggested and liberality is needed for, a Foster Home or Hospital seems most to combine provision for the present and the future requirements of the poor.

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[9] Diane Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 186–187.
[10] Ibid., 210.
[11] Rebecca Gratz, Quoted in Diane Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 211.
[12] A Daughter of Israel, "A Foster Home," *Occident* Vol. 8, No. 1 (April 1850).

> Some slight efforts have been made, and strong wishes have been expressed, to establish such an institution; but good wishes alone will not avail, or the wants of helpless childhood had ere this found protection, and the pangs of disease been alleviated by the kind hand of brotherly love. The pecuniary means are wanting. Ye who have abundance of God's gifts, ye who are clad in purple, and dwell in palaces, remember that to "open wide thy hand to thy needy brother"[13] is the command of that God who hath so blessed your store; remember that "the poor shall never cease out of thy land"[14] demands, that from your abundance provision shall be made for them.[15]

Pulling from her experiences from working in many charitable organizations, Gratz was able to use the contemporary image of the American lady—pious, virtuous, and sensitive—to advance the cause of a foster home in the Philadelphia community.

Five years after her appeal, the Jewish Foster Home Society was officially incorporated by the city of Philadelphia. In those first few years of the Home's existence, it seems evident that the women who were actively involved in the Home's affairs saw their roles through the lens of the cultural concept of the woman's sphere. In fact, Gratz insisted that "religious influence and maternal care" were critically important to the Home's governance. She also believed that the Home's system of discipline was to be mediated by, "love, forbearance, and good

[13] Deuteronomy 15:11
[14] Ibid.
[15] A Daughter of Israel, "A Foster Home," *Occident* Volume 8, No. 1 (April 1850).

judgment."[16] For Gratz, the Jewish Foster Home (JFH) had been founded not only to rescue Jewish children from poverty and destitution, but also to forge "the religious dedication of younger Jewish women."[17] Gratz understood that organizations like the Jewish Foster Home provided Jewish women with the otherwise unavailable opportunity to participate in the social, civic, and religious arenas of their communities. Gratz appears to have succeeded in presenting charitable organizations as important and attractive opportunities for young Jewish women to meet and work with respected and established matrons. In fact, it appears that the lure was so strong that some non-Jewish women chose to convert to Judaism in order to participate.[18] The most prominent and powerful example of this function of Jewish charities can be found in the 1855 formal conversion of Louisa Gratz, the niece of Rebecca Gratz, whose new status as a Jew allowed her to be counted as one of the founding members of the JFH.[19]

Having established the more general cultural milieu from which the founders of the JFH emerged, it is now possible to focus on the women of the JFH in particular. The founding members of the Jewish Foster Home were nineteen women—thirteen married and six unmarried.[20] According to its original constitution, the JFH was run by a Board of Managers, made up entirely of women. This board was complemented

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[16] Rebecca Gratz. Quoted in Diane Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 211.
[17] Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 214–215.
[18] Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 215.
[19] Ibid.
[20] *Constitution and By-Laws*, (Philadelphia: Rudolph Stein, Printer, 1855). https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n5/mode/2up (accessed 9 March 2014), 4.

by a "Board of Council consisting of six gentlemen"[21] that would provide guidance on financial and legal matters.[22] The following women were the founding members of the Jewish Foster Home Society:[23]

Mrs. Anna Allen	Mrs. David Samuel (Esther)
Mrs. Jacob L. Florance (Hannah)	Mrs. William Florance (Matilda)
Miss Rebecca Gratz	Miss Louisa Gratz
Miss Emily Phillips	Miss Rachael Pesoa
Miss Clara Phillips	Mrs. Abraham Hart (Rebecca)
Mrs. Leon Berg (Marian)	Mrs. Benjamin Lieber (Rachel)
Mrs. Jospeh L. Moss (Julia)	Mrs. Joseph M. Asch (Clara)
Mrs. Abraham Finzi	Mrs. Henry Newhouse (Matilda)
Mrs. Isidore Binswanger (Elizabeth Sophia)	Mrs. Henry Cohen (Matilda)

Miss C. E. Weil

The names of the officers and managers of the Home during the year of 1855 also appear in the published constitutional booklet:[24]

First Directress:	Mrs. Anna Allen
Second Directress:	Mrs. David Samuel (Esther)
Treasurer:	Miss Louisa Gratz
Secretary:	Miss Evelyn Bomeisler

[21] *Constitution and By-Laws*, 4.
[22] Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 211–212.
[23] *Constitution and By-Laws*, 4.
[24] Ibid., 12.

Managers:

Mrs. Joseph M. Asch (Clara)
Mrs. Leon Berg (Marian)
Mrs. Isidore Binswanger (Elizabeth Sophia)
Mrs. Henry Cohen (Matilda)
Mrs. Edward Johnson Etting (Phillippa)
Mrs. Abraham Finzi
Mrs. Jacob L. Florance (Hannah)
Mrs. William Florance[27] (Matilda)[28]
Mrs. Jacob Frankel[29] (Fanny)
Miss Rebecca Gratz
Mrs. Solomon Gans (Sarah)[30]
Mrs. Abraham Hart (Rebecca)
Mrs. Benjamin Lieber (Rachel)
Mrs. Joseph L. Moss (Julia/Juliet)
Mrs. Henry Newhouse (Matilda)
Miss Rachael Pesoa
Miss Emily Phillips[25]
Miss Clara Phillips[26]
Mrs. George D. Rosengarten (Elizabeth)
Mrs. Joseph Rosenbaum (Henrietta)
Mrs. Henry Simpson
Mrs. Lazarus Schloss (Babette)
Miss C. E. Weil

[25] In the list of Managers, Emily is given the title Mrs. but for the purpose of continuity, she will continue to appear in this study as Miss. Emily Phillips was the daughter of the prominent Philadelphia lawyer, Zelegman Phillips, and the granddaughter of Jonas Phillips, who in 1782 became the first president of Philadelphia's *Mikveh Israel.*
[26] Clara Phillips title is also changed to Mrs. in the list of managers. She will also continue to appear as Miss for the sake of continuity.
[27] The surname "Florance" which appears in the list of signatories is changed to "Florence" in this list of managers. As the name has been most often recorded as Florance, this study will use that spelling.
[28] Matilda/Myrtilla Florance was the daughter of Gershom Mendes Seixas. Seixas was elected as the *chazan* of New York City's *Shearith Israel* in 1768. He was an avowed American patriot who convinced his congregation to close during the British occupation of New York. During the 1780s, Seixas served as the *chazan* of Philadelphia's *Mikveh Israel* until eventually returning to New York's *Shearith Israel*. In 1787, Seixas was one of the clergy who participated in the inauguration of George Washington as the first President of the United States.
[29] Mrs. Frankel's husband was the Reverend Jacob Frankel who served *Rodeph Shalom*, an Ashkenazic synagogue that was chartered in 1812.
[30] Mrs. Solomon Gans (Sarah) is listed as "Miss S. Gans" in the published list of the 1855 Board of Managers. As she is listed as Mrs. S. Gans in every other list of managers or supporters, this study will refer to her as Mrs. Solomon Gans.

Among the managers who stewarded the JFH through its first year of existence were women from some of the most prominent families of Philadelphia. Anna Allen held the position of First Directress from 1855 until 1867.[31] Allen was born in 1800 to Johavith (Jochebed) Isaacs[32] and Michael Marks. Anna's father, Michael, came to North America in 1772[33] and served in the American army during the Revolutionary War.[34] Anna's mother's family had lived in the American colonies for generations; her great-grandfather, Abraham Isaacs, had arrived in New York in 1697.[35] Anna married Lewis Allen when she was 23 and spent most of her adult life in Philadelphia. Lewis Allen served as the president of *Mikveh Israel* for seven years before passing away in 1847. As a widow, Allen spent her time working for the betterment of the Jewish community of Philadelphia. She served as an officer of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society[36] and the Hebrew Sunday School Society[37] and helped found the JFH, occupying its highest office for more than a decade.[38]

At least two of the women on the first board of the JFH belonged to the influential Phillips family. Jonas Phillips, the patriarch of the clan, was born in

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[31] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 43.
[32] Johavith's surname name sometimes appears in genealogical records as Isaacks.
[33] Malcolm H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies: 1654–1988* (Ottenheimer Publishing, 1991), 185.
[34] William B. Hackeburg (30 April 1905). Quoted in Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 80–82.
[35] Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 120.
[36] The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded in 1820 by a group of women from *Mikveh Israel*, including Rebecca Gratz. It is the oldest Jewish charity in the United States, and continues to work for the people of Philadelphia 194 years after its founding.
[37] The Hebrew Sunday School Society was founded by Rebecca Gratz in 1838. Gratz hoped that by using the model of Christian Sunday Schools the Society would be able to effectively educate generations of American Jews. The Sunday School structure that Gratz and the board of the Hebrew Sunday School Society created was quickly adopted by groups of women in other towns and cities.
[38] William B. Hackeburg (30 April 1905). Quoted in Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 80—82.

Prussia in 1735 and came to Philadelphia in 1762. His married Rebecca Mendes Machado, the daughter of Reverend David Mendes Machado, the *chazan* of New York City's *Shearith Israel*. After starting their family in New York, Jonas and Rebecca Phillips moved their children to Philadelphia in 1774. In 1778, Jonas enlisted as a private in the militia of Philadelphia. After fighting in the American Revolution, he remained an outspoken American patriot and proud Jewish citizen.[39] Rebecca Phillips was also committed to serving her city. In 1801, she helped found the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances.[40] She served as the First Directress of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society of Philadelphia.[41] During their thirty-nine years of marriage, Jonas and Rebecca had twenty-one children together. When studying their family tree, it is clear that the patriotism and philanthropy of Rebecca and Jonas were considered to have been important family values by their many descendants.[42]

By serving as managers of the JFH, two of Rebecca's granddaughters, Rachael[43] Pesoa and Emily Phillips, appear to have followed their grandmother's philanthropic example.[44] Rachael was the daughter of Isaac Pesoa and Phila

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[39] Mikveh Israel History, "Commodore Uriah Phillips (1792–1862)," http://mikvehisraelhistory.com/2013/04/11/commodore-uriah-phillips-levy-1792-1862/ (accessed 8 March 2014).
[40] The mission of the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances was to help indigent women and children by providing them with food and clothing. It also assisted the victims of the yellow fever epidemic in Baltimore.
[41] Jewish Women's Archive, "Rebecca Machado Phillips (1746–1831)," http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/phillips-rebecca-machado (accessed 9 March 2014).
[42] Among the descendants of Jonas and Rebecca Phillips was Uriah Phillips Levy, the first Jewish Commodore in the United States Navy. He was the son of Rachel Phillips and Michael Levy and the grandson of Jonas and Rebecca Phillips.
[43] In the records of the JFH, Miss Pesoa's given name is sometimes spelled Rachael while at other times is spelled Rachel.
[44] This researcher was unable to locate genealogical records for Clara Phillips. It is logical that she too belonged to this large, Philadelphia based family, but this could not be proven for this study.

Phillips, the third child of Jonas and Rebecca Phillips.[45] Emily was the eleventh child of Arabella Solomons and Zelegman Phillips, the thirteenth child of Rebecca and Jonas.[46] Rachael Pesoa died a year after the founding of the JFH. To mark her passing, Evelyn Bomeisler, the long-time secretary of the JFH, included a tribute in the report she submitted at the second annual meeting of the Jewish Foster Home Society:

> We cannot refer to the loss of one of the most estimable and useful members of the Society, Miss Rachel Pesoa, without feelings of the most sincere regret. In her ascent heavenward may her mantle of charity have fallen upon a successor, who will emulate her virtues, [*sic*] and follow in the long-trodden path of her charities.[47]

Like her first cousin, Rachael, Emily Phillips never married and spent much of her time and resources on charitable pursuits. Emily's mother Arabella Solomon was a "lifelong friend" of Rebecca Gratz, and Emily became one "of Gratz's most reliable associates."[48]

It is interesting that of the four women elected as officers and the twenty-three women appointed to the Board of Managers, only six[49] were the first of their

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[45] Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 243, 159.
[46] Ibid., 243.
[47] *Second Annual Report of the Jewish Foster Home Society of Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, Printers, 1857) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n41/mode/2up (Accessed 9 March 2014), 4.
[48] Diane Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 41.
[49] This researcher was unable to confirm the birthplaces of three women: Mrs. Abraham Finzi, Mrs. Henry Simpson, and Miss C. E. Weil. In the case of Clara Phillips, the fact that her family had come to North America before the Revolutionary War suggests that, while no record of her birthplace was found, she was most likely born in America.

families to live in America.[50] Of additional interest is that of the women born in the United States, many were actually relatives. What follows is a list of only a few of the many family connections between the managers and officers of the JFH. The founder of the JFH, Rebecca Gratz, was the aunt of both Louisa Gratz and Edward Johnson Etting,[51] whose wife, Phillipa, served as manager of the JFH.[52] As was already mentioned, Rachael Pesoa and Emily Phillips were second cousins and members of the prominent Phillips family. Hannah and Matilda (sometimes listed as Myrtilla) Florance were sisters-in-law as they had married the brothers Jacob and William Florance, respectively.[53] Second Directress, Esther Samuel was the sister-in-law of Julia/Juliet Moss, who was married to Esther's brother, Joseph Lyons Moss.[54] First Directress, Anna Allen, was the first cousin of Rebecca Hart (formerly Rebecca Isaacs). Aside from the bonds of blood and marriage, the lives of these women were connected through their synagogues, charity work, and longstanding friendships. Their high levels of interconnectivity as well as their membership in some of the most prominent families of Philadelphia and of the United States meant that these women had both resources and familial support on which they could call in their efforts.

To complement their leadership, the managers of the JFH established a Board of Council. The first Board of Council was made up of only five men, "Hyman Gratz, Abraham Hart, Sabato Morais, and men of the Moss and Newhouse families whose

[50] The relationship between established Jewish communities and later waves of Jewish immigrants will be examined in detail in chapter three.
[51] Stern, *First American Jewish Families*, 87.
[52] Ibid., 67.
[53] Ibid., 74.
[54] Ibid., 214.

female relatives were managers."[55] The creation of these two separate and intentionally unequal boards (in that the Board of Council served only in an advisory role) reflected the socially constructed notion of family in the mid-nineteenth century—where the creation and maintenance of a home was a "female responsibility" while "the male providers were permanently away on business…."[56] That the founders of the JFH operated from this governing assumption (i.e., that the JFH should be run as any home would be run) becomes even more obvious in the section of the "Constitution and By-Laws" entitled "Rules for the Regulation of the Home." Within these rules, the JFH is repeatedly referred to as a "family."

> 1. The children and family shall rise at daylight.
>
> 2. After being washed, dressed and combed in the bath-room [*sic*], they shall assemble in the school-room, where the matron shall read a family prayer, including the "Shemang,"[57] after a form given to the Matron by the Managers…
>
> 10. No person employed in the family shall on any account inflict punishment[58] except the matron or the teacher.[59]

That first year, the female managers of the JFH not only served as the governing board of the Home, but also, "did much of the day-to-day work of the home, apart

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[55] Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 212.
[56] Ibid.
[57] According to this Sephardic pronunciation, the Hebrew "*shema*" is transliterated as "Shemang."
[58] The question of the proper way to punish the wards of the JFH was repeatedly addressed in the reports of the visiting committees of 1855. In one of these reports, the committee explained that they had investigated whether or not the matron had been whipping the children, and upon discovering that she had, immediately told her that whipping was not considered acceptable by the managers of the JFH. Visiting Committee Reports, 5 June 1855–21 August 1855, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1938), MS 335/ box 4/ folder 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
[59] *Constitution and By-Laws*, 9–10.

from that performed by the matron, a servant, and an occasional teacher…. Like many foster homes [and] orphan asylums… around the country, the JFH, an institution with limited funds, depended on the personal commitment and labor of its female managers."[60]

Through a collection of committee reports from 1855, it is possible to peer into the interaction between the wealthy, benevolent ladies, and the staff and children of the Home. The constitution of the JFH created a process through which different members would experience parts of Home life.

> The *Weekly Committees* shall visit the "Home" not less than three times during their week, shall endeavor to be present once at each meal, and if possible, during one morning and one afternoon's school hours. They shall observe if the children and the concerns of the house generally are properly regulated and report their observations in the Minute Book. …The Committee shall act upon their judgment in all cases requiring immediate attention, but any permanent alteration in the rules of the family must be by the vote of the Board.[61]

Only the committee reports from June, July, and August of 1855 survive. These reports reveal both an organization still in its infancy as well as the deep investment of the women who worked on its behalf. On June 5th, the committee members reported their findings after spending time at the Home every day except Shabbat,

> The house looked very clean and in good order, the children tidy, contented and happy, and the Committee were pleased with the

[60] Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz*, 215.
[61] *Constitution and By-Laws*, 8.

> efforts of the Matron…. The Committee were also [able to] question some of the little ones and were gratified at their responses…. [Having found] the Bath tub [*sic*] unfit for use in consequence of a Leakage [*sic*], [we] visited the landlord and induced him to send without further delay and have it attended to…. The Committee report the servant woman, Ann, as very untidy in her appearance, and unwilling to assist the Matron in mending for the children, and doing many things which should not [involve] the Matron. The Committee therefore recommend a more capable, suitable and willing person be obtained to supply her place.[62]

In just this one week, the women on this committee were involved in assessing the facilities of the Home (as well as in dealing with the landlord when plumbing problems were identified), the children's perception of their time at the Home, and a staffing issue that was affecting the efficiency of Home life. Over the course of the next few months, the women on the visiting committees dealt with allegations of bad behavior by the children, issues arising from the unregulated visits of the parents of the JFH's children (including one ward's contraction of the measles), and an increasingly dissatisfied matron.[63] While these reports clearly show that these women had not anticipated handling some of the challenging facets of the JFH's management, it is nevertheless quite apparent that they possessed many

[62] Visiting Committee Reports, 5 June 1855–21 August 1855, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1938), MS 335/ box 4/ folder 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
[63] Ibid.

remarkable resources (both emotional and financial) that would be used to advance the Home's fundamental mission.

The role of matron has been mentioned throughout this chapter, and before examining the ways in which the JFH was reorganized in 1874, it is appropriate to explore the matron's position in greater detail. As has already been discussed, the matron was meant to be the maternal presence at the head of the large family of the Jewish Foster Home. The first matron of the JFH was Miss Harriet Brown. Little is known about Miss Brown, but Fleischman noted that the limited financial resources of the new JFH meant that Brown earned a very small salary. Fleischman went on to explain that between 1855 and 1874, the JFH was supervised by a total of fifteen matrons, only one of whom stayed for more than two years.[64] The fractured nature of the matron's position in the JFH can be tracked in appearance of newspaper announcements and advertisements. The following announcement appeared in *The Jewish Messenger*[65] on March 26, 1858, "We are pleased to learn that Miss Rebecca Crawcour, a highly accomplished co-religionist, has been elected matron of the 'Jewish Foster Home,' of Philadelphia. We feel assured that the appointment will give general satisfaction."[66] Unfortunately, this announcement is followed by the following advertisement on February 17, 1860, "WANTED. A MATRON [*sic*] to take charge of the 'Jewish Foster Home' of Philadelphia. Immediate application to be

[64] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 14.
[65] *The Jewish Messenger* was founded in 1857 in New York. In 1903 it merged with *The American Hebrew.*
[66] "Display Ad 4," *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (26 March 1858): 52.

made to Mrs. Anna Allen, President of the Jewish Foster Home."[67] Similar advertisements and announcements continued to appear in *The Jewish Messenger*.

It is unclear what skills a woman needed to become the matron of the JFH, although Fleischman does remark that Harriet Brown, "… felt herself competent and willing to assist in the instruction of English, German and Hebrew…."[68] In spite of their vague qualifications, small salaries, and short tenures, the matrons of the JFH had a huge role in shaping the experiences of the children living in the Home. In 1869, *The Jewish Messenger* published a number of holiday wishes written by the wards of the JFH to their current matron, Mrs. Esther Levy. The newspaper prefaced the letters by remarking that, "It is pleasing to record the pleasant feelings which animate the inmates of the Home."[69] The fact that the letters were chosen to serve as publicity materials for the JFH does not diminish the insights that the notes provide into the relationships between the wards and matrons of the JFH.

Three brothers write:

> The old year and all its events have passed and the new year has dawned upon us. May we improve better than we did the past year. If we have caused you any trouble, we hope you will forgive us, and we will try and behave better during the following year. We hope we may improve in our studies, so that when we grow to be men, we may rise to independence, if not wealth, and become religious, God-fearing men…. May we be loving and unselfish to our schoolmates, and not

[67] "Display Ad 2," *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (17 February 1860): 54.
[68] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 14.
[69] "Article 2," *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (8 October 1869): 4.

deny them a share of any good things we may have, if they ask us.

Wishing you a happy New Year, we will close.

Your affectionate foster children.

Two little girls say:

We take great pleasure in writing to you a happy new year's letter, and thanking you for taking care of us, and providing us with such good food, and taking us out to Fairmount to enjoy many happy picnics, and teaching us to become good and useful women.

A boy adds:

We should repent of all the bad actions we have committed during the past year, and try to improve in our conduct towards you and everybody. We should feel great gratitude to you who have watched over us and guarded us with the utmost care and attention, although we may think it hard when we are young to be punished and corrected; but we will know better when we grow older. That God may shower down blessings upon you, and the benevolent ladies who have protected us from the evils of the world, fed and supported us—and that they may enjoy every happiness on earth, is the wish of their true foster-child.[70]

These letters suggest that the matron (or at least the current matron, Mrs. Esther Levy) filled the role of foster parent—correcting behavior, providing the children with their meals, and generally watching over her wards. The matron remained the

[70] "Article 2," *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (8 October 1869): 4.

primary caregiver and guardian of the wards of the JFH until 1879 when a married couple was hired as the superintendent and matron of the Home.[71] From that point forward, the superintendent became the head of the Jewish Foster Home family while his wife, the matron, worked to fulfill his vision of Home life.

In 1874, the management structure of the Jewish Foster Home changed dramatically. Reverend Samuel Fleischman, who served as the superintendent of the Home around the turn of the century, referred to this transformation as "The Reorganization."[72] In this year, the balance of power between the Board of Managers and Board of Council appears to have been reversed. With the adoption of a new constitution, the Jewish Foster Home became the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (JFHOA)—a new administrative organization with an all-*male* Board of Managers that was complemented by a newly created Ladies' Associate Board.[73] The first president of the Ladies' Associate Board, Mrs. Henry Cohen,[74] had been the First Directress of the JFH for three years prior to the reorganization of the Home.[75] The women who served on the newly created Ladies' Associate Board were, "entrusted with the general supervision of the Home, and [were] to assist the Board of Managers in the management of its internal affairs."[76] From this auxiliary position, the women continued to be personally involved in the life of the home and made substantive contributions to institution's general welfare. However, from

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[71] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 32.
[72] Ibid., 21.
[73] Ibid., 22.
[74] Mrs. Henry Cohen (Matilda) was born in England in 1820. She appears as a founding member of the Jewish Foster Home Society and served on the JFH's first Board of Managers. After arranging the reorganization of the Home in 1874, Cohen served as the President of the Ladies' Associate Board until 1879. She died in January 1888. Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 43.
[75] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 43.
[76] Ibid., 22–23.

1874 on, women were never again in positions of ultimate administrative control or supervisory authority.[77]

This transition from female to male leadership was common in charitable organizations in this period,[78] and while philanthropy was an accepted "occupation" for wealthy women, women's management of organizations was often criticized—specifically in regards to the ladies' ability to manage money. The JFH's reorganization reflected a larger trend within charitable organizations[79] as the men of various communities took over control from female mangers.[80] Despite the antagonism that many female boards faced from their communities' leaders, it is unclear from the available records whether the women on the Board of Managers initiated the change in the Home's organization. Fleischman identified the Board of Council's response to the JFH's financial strain as the first step toward the reorganization of the administration. He explained that the male members Board of Council had been responsible for successfully reaching previously unconnected supporters when in 1867 they, for the first time, sought subscribers from every congregation in Philadelphia. Most of the subscriptions from 1867 were for five-

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[77] *Charter*, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Potsdamer & Co. Print, 1875) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n113/mode/2up (accessed 25 March 2014), 7.

[78] For more information about this phenomenon, see: Mary Roth Walsh, *"Doctors Wanted, No Women Need Apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835–1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). See also, Virginia G. Drachman, and Equity Club., *Women Lawyers and the Origins of Professional Identity in America: The Letters of the Equity Club, 1887 to 1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

[79] The Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society (HSGS) of New York was founded by women in 1879. One woman, Priscilla Joachimsen, served as the HSGS' president for nineteen years after its creation. In the early 1890s Joachimsen was replaced by Samuel Levy who immediately restructured the administration of the HSGS so that the Board of Managers consisted solely of men. Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 13.

[80] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 12–14.

year commitments. In his chapter on the reorganization, Fleischman explained that while the Board of Council went about soliciting the next batch of subscriptions, "the sentiment for a complete reorganization, which had developed during the [past several] years, crystallized into definite action."[81] Whether or not Fleischman was unaware of the tensions between the two administrations, it does appear that most of the women involved in the JFH's early years continued to be involved with the new JFHOA. It seems that if the female managers harbored any resentment toward the new male administrations, it did not stop them from demonstrating their support of the organization.

Women appear to have had direct administrative control over the JFH from its founding in 1855 until its "reorganization" in 1874. This period was summarized and, in many ways, dismissed in both Fleischman's history of the JFH as well as in the memoir/chronicle of the JFH written by one of the twentieth-century wards, Jules Doneson.[82] Although Samuel Fleischman paid homage to the religious sensibilities and work that these early women invested into the Home, both men were quick to label the early history of the JFH as a time of trouble or problems. In his history of the JFH, Fleischman called these years the "*Sturm und Drang*" period,[83] thereby characterizing the period as being one of turmoil and restlessness. Doneson

[81] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 22.
[82] In 1924, a five-year-old Doneson was admitted to the JFHOA. He and his sister lived there for twelve-and-a-half years. In 1924, Doneson's younger brother was too young to live in the JFHOA and was admitted to the Hebrew Sheltering Home, where he lived until he joined his siblings at the JFHOA in 1929. (Doneson, 68) Doneson's mother, Anna is listed as a patient of the Philadelphia Hospital Mental Division in the 1930 census. (1930 Census (Population Schedule), Philadelphia City, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania; Sheet 5b, line 57; 3 April 1930.)
[83] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 16.

described these years as a "difficult and bitter interval in the Home's history,"[84] and he suggested that by the end of this period there was only one conclusion to be drawn: "These dedicated Jewish women of Philadelphia, lacking affiliation with a credible charitable organization or federation, and not having recognized qualification for their assumed task, hardly appreciated the true dimensions of their responsibility. The time had come for the men of their faith to contribute forcefully and materially."[85] Unfortunately for modern scholars, there is no way to know how the female managers of the Home would have assessed their time in power. Unlike the collection of documents from the subsequent years, only a small number of documents from this stage of the JFH have survived. Therefore, a historical analysis of this period must rely on the few early documents that are available, to references to the Home in contemporaneous newspapers, and on surviving census records from the period. As is so often the case, the voices of historical women are almost completely lost to modern reader. Any and all conclusions drawn about this period have, out of necessity, been based on the retrospective assessment of male historians and without the benefit of sources that preserved the voices of the female founders themselves.

Over the course of the nineteen years that women controlled the JFH, one hundred and twelve children found refuge within its walls. Writing in 1905, Samuel Fleischman recalled that, of those first members of the JFH "family," "One is today a Jewish minister; one, a member of a business firm favorably known throughout the entire country, many are happily married and others are successful merchants in

[84] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 15.
[85] Ibid.

[Philadelphia] and other cities."[86] While it is impossible to judge the work of the founding "Daughters of Israel" based solely on the success of some of their former wards, it does appear that these Jewish women, shaped by their social and religious sensibilities, succeeded in creating an organization that would support Jewish children for almost a century. Aside from their effectiveness as managers, this accomplishment should not be overlooked.

After the reorganization in 1874, the Jewish Foster Home became a more financially secure organization with powerful patrons from Philadelphia's largest congregations. This financial stability allowed the new, all-male Board of Managers to successfully encounter a force that would transform the Jewish communities on the East Coast—a new population of Jewish Americans. The next chapter examines the ways the JFH responded to the arrival of East European Jewish immigrants.

[86] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 19.

Chapter 3: The Arrival of East European Jews

Between the years 1881 and 1914, more than two million Jews arrived in America. These immigrants came from Russia, Romania, and Austria-Hungary, and are collectively classified as East European Jews. The Jewish men, women, and children who immigrated during this period were only a small part of the huge emigration wave of thirty-five million East Europeans who left their homes during this same period of time in order to travel to America. At the end of the nineteenth century, there was little holding Jews in East European lands. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 led to widespread anti-Judaism in Russia. Pogroms and restrictive legislation made being Jewish in Russia and Romania an untenable proposition.[1] Between 1881 and 1914, 80% of all Jews leaving Russia chose to immigrate to the United States with the majority of that number arriving through the port of New York. This immigration wave of both Jews and non-Jews from East European nations was massive, and these new immigrants constituted a noteworthy percentage of the population of the port cities on the East Coast.[2]

Of the Jews who came to America between 1881 and 1914, 45.6% were women and 24% were children. From these statistics we discover that Jewish women and children immigrating to the USA from East Europe constituted a much higher percent of the total Jewish immigration than did women and children among the non-Jewish immigrants from East Europe who came to this country at the very

[1] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 151–152.
[2] Ibid., 153–154.

same time.[3] The high numbers of East European Jews who were women and children have led some to label it a "family migration,"[4] but these same sources acknowledge that the process of immigration placed unprecedented strain on the family unit. The damage often began when the male members of the household went to America alone to earn money and prepare lives for their families; however, families often continued to struggle once wives and children joined their relatives in America. As recent immigrants, these families were under intense economic pressure—often both parents were required to work outside of the home. East European Jews found themselves living within an unfamiliar social structure and were forced to rethink how to care for their families without the help of a large and nearby extended family. In the "new world," women's work brought in less money than men's, and, "[t]he gendered expectations regarding work and the lower salaries that women earned made mothers particularly vulnerable when no male breadwinner could be counted upon. Women were more likely to be poor than men."[5] Immigrant families broken by desertion, death, or divorce were the most frequent patrons of the Jewish orphan asylums during this period.

The struggles of immigrant families are clearly reflected in the records of Jewish orphanages from this time—most of which included some explanation of the child's circumstances in his/her admission file. For immigrants living in crowded, urban neighborhoods, the mortality rate was much higher than it is today.

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[3] Ibid., 154.
[4] Paula E. Hyman, "Eastern European Immigrants in the United States," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 1 March 2009. Jewish Women's Archive. http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eastern-european-immigrants-in-united-states (Accessed on February 17, 2014).
[5] Ibid.

Historians have noted that "[t]he four major causes of death in tenement districts were tuberculosis, industrial accidents, complications of childbirth, and poor living conditions."[6] Many Jewish wives lost their husbands to these threats, but many women also found themselves alone when their husbands deserted them.[7] The problem of desertion was widespread among the Jewish immigrant population:

> Some Jewish communal institutions, such as the *Jewish Daily Forward,* sought to shame deserters into returning to their wives through its "Gallery of Missing Husbands." Much like the rogues' gallery developed by the police, this domestic Yiddish version contained the faces as well as brief biographies of husbands on the lam, hoping that alert readers would report their whereabouts to the authorities.[8]

Towards the end of the period of the large-scale immigration of East European Jews (1911), the problem of desertion became serious enough that the National Desertion Bureau was created in order to force husbands to support their families. The Desertion Bureau closed in "1922 when social workers no longer considered desertion to be a serious problem" and, over the course of those eleven years, investigated more than twelve thousand cases.[9] Knowing the economic, social, and health struggles of the new immigrant population, it should be no surprise that "the most common causes of commitment to Jewish child care institutions in this period

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[6] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 154.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jenna Weissman Joselit, "Modern Jewish Family in the United States." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 1 March 2009. Jewish Women's Archive. http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/modern-jewish-family-in-united-states (Viewed on February 14, 2014).
[9] Ibid.

were the death of one parent, desertion, indigence, or the illness or incapacitation of one or both parents."[10] For these reasons and more, many immigrant families were unable to care for their children and sought assistance from Jewish charities.

The Jewish Foster Home in Philadelphia was one of those charities that sought to care for Jewish immigrant families. The JFH adapted its policies and priorities in order to meet the needs and values of the recent immigrants but was, at least in some cases, slower to do so than other Jewish childcare organizations. This chapter will examine three aspects of the Home's response to the East European immigration wave: (a) the repercussions of the children of immigrants being separated from their parents; (b) the role of the Home in combating the perceived danger to Jewish women's moral stature; and (c) the impact of the immigrant generation's more traditional Jewish expectations on the Home's infrastructure.

The question of how much access the Foster Home should provide the parents of their wards goes back to the first months of the JFH's existence. On June 18, 1855, the Visiting Committee[11] reported that the matron had asked that the children's parents be allowed to visit only on a specific day rather than whenever they wished. The next Visiting Committee reported on June 25, 1855 that they believed it necessary to send a copy of the rules to the wards' families as the parents continued to visit outside of the appointed times. In the June 25th report, the committee members explained that there were serious and practical reasons for limiting the parents' access to their children as one of the boys in the Home was now

[10] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 155.
[11] Each week there was a different group of women who served as the "Visiting Committee." These women would spend time at the JFH assessing the staff's behavior and the health and happiness of the children.

ill, and they found it likely that, "Mr. Ecstein brought the [illness] to his child, having children at home with the same disease."[12] In this case, the danger of allowing parents to interact with the children they had committed to the JFH was easily demonstrable—an illness had been brought from one or more of the outside visitors, and this put the Home and all of its young wards at risk. But in the decades leading up to the turn of the century, the managers of the JFH began to understand the dangers of parental visits in a different way.

It is interesting to note that the concern over limiting interaction between the JFH's children and their parents actually precedes the existence of the Home itself. In an editorial note attached to Rebecca Gratz's anonymous call for a Jewish orphan asylum, Rabbi Isaac Leeser wrote passionately about the need to provide a safe place for children who would otherwise be forced to live by immoral means. However, in contrast to what social psychologists and child care officials would suggest years later, Leeser did not conclude that an inclination toward crime was the biological inheritance of all poor children:

> It is possible enough that… parents might not be willing to surrender their children to any society… and indeed it would be a laudable feeling in the poor were they to object to giving up the highest, the tenderest duty of humanity, to fashion themselves the mind of their offspring. But again, it may be said, that when you find such poor persons, who so highly value their position as parents, you may freely leave their children with them, for these will learn nothing but what is

[12] Visiting Committee Reports, 1855, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1938), MS 335/ box 4/ folder 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

> good and truthful… . Wherefore, all you would have to do in this case would be to give such occasional aid and advice, as would enable the parents to execute, in good faith, their duty as guardians and protectors of their children….[13]

It is clear that Leeser's understanding of poverty was not based on the assumption that all children would be better off living in an institution like the Jewish Foster Home. Instead, he proposed the idea that the only desirable attribute that some poor parents lacked was wealth.

Around the turn of the century, the allowances that Leeser had been willing to make in order to explain the failings of some parents became less and less common. Reverend Samuel Fleischman and his wife, Matilda Fleischman, served respectively as superintendent and matron of the Jewish Foster Home from 1886 to 1909. In his 1905 history of the JFH, Fleischman explained that he relied on Dr. Nathan Oppenheim's book, *The Development of the Child*, when considering, "…how far inherited qualities are responsible for the development of character, and whether hereditary habits are modified or eradicated by education and environment…."[14] In his book, Dr. Oppenheimer[15] examined and ultimately dismissed the idea that the morality (or lack thereof) of the parents stamps itself onto the child in any kind of biological way.[16] Oppenheim proposed that while there is an obvious transmission of attributes from parent to child, the strongest

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[13] Isaac Leeser, "A Note By the Editor," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (April 1850).
[14] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 90.
[15] When *The Development of the Child* was published in 1898, Dr. Oppenheimer was the attending physician to the pediatric department of the Mt. Sinai Hospital Dispensary.
[16] Nathan Oppenheim, *The Development of the Child* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), 184.

manifestation of that inheritance would be in the form of a predisposition (which he defined as, "a moulding [*sic*] force at work upon the child's structure that the influence of environment [can mitigate])."[17] Oppenheim devoted a chapter of his book to the discussion of heredity and environment. After speaking of the role of both factors in a child's development, he concluded in this way:

> Parents control the bodies and minds, the hearts and souls of their children not so much by what their ancestors were as by what they themselves do and think. … Instead of the saying, "Like father like son," one should rather say, "As the father lives, so lives the son." … The trustworthiness of children depends upon the elements of environment, acting upon certain inherited conditions which go to create the qualities of thinking clearly and seeing straight."[18]

Oppenheim's belief that the environment shaped the future of a child translated into an equally strong conviction that in cases where "normal nutrition for body and mind" were not being provided by the parents, it was proper and even critical that an external force intervene.[19] In the following address from 1893, it is possible to see how Fleischman used Oppenheim's conclusions about the power of environment and the need to replace parents who were failing their children.

> It must be borne in mind that the children who are thrown upon public charity come as a rule from a degenerated class of humanity.

[17] Ibid., 75.
[18] Ibid., 91–92.
[19] Ibid., 241–242.

> The children who are from better blood are the exceptions….[20]
>
> Making due allowance for parental as well as filial affection, and perhaps just because of these, the necessity which separates these children from their natural protectors is to them a blessing in disguise, while to the community and the state it is a positive gain. Human capacity or incapacity, virtue or vice, is hereditary… and the tendency to dependence, the lack of self-respect, the utter absence of a higher motive and the absolute disregard for all laws of cleanliness and health, are as discernible in the offspring as they are apparent in its progenitors.[21]

While Fleischman uses Oppenheim's arguments to champion the opportunity with which these children have been presented (i.e. being brought to the JFH), he failed to acknowledge the fact that some of the "flaws" he found in both the parents and children may have be the product of anything from cultural differences to abject poverty. Reverend Fleischman's conviction that his administration provided a better home for these vulnerable children reflected the opinions of those managing most of the Jewish orphanages of the time—all of whom sought to balance their wards' problematic cultural, social, and biological inheritance with the training and

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[20] Fleischman's statement reflects the then-accepted science of eugenics, which sought to improve the world by harnessing and directing the power and potential of evolution. Proponents of eugenics believed that by controlling the pairings and breeding of humankind, physical, mental, and moral failings could eventually be eradicated. For more information on the subject, see: Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and The American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003).

[21] Samuel Fleischman (1893). Quoted in Reena Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States*, *1880–1925* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 164.

education that their organizations could provide.[22] Fleischman and the other directors of Jewish orphanages thought that by supplanting their wards' parents they were actually gifting them with a better family. There is evidence that these superintendents did have some success in convincing the children to embrace their new, "institutional" families. For example, in the case of the JFH, some wards appear to have accepted the idea that the Home was simply another iteration of a family. One alumnus of the Foster Home remarked that, "[t]he kids were happy at the JFH. There wasn't the feeling that perhaps you were missing something from your family life. You lived in a big family."[23]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the managers of orphanages like the JFH were particularly concerned with combating what they saw as a growing trend toward immorality among immigrant women. For many established Jewish communities in America, the idea that recent Jewish immigrants were leading less reputable lives was not only a moral issue but a public relations problem. In general, social reformers of this period worried that young immigrant women were working as prostitutes in large, East Coast cities. Some of this concern was based in fact, as, "17 percent of women arrested for prostitution in Manhattan between 1913 and 1930 were Jewish…."[24] In fact, the National Council of Jewish women was so alarmed by the number of young, Jewish prostitutes that they "concluded that the greatest single threat to female immigrants was the white slave trade. Often traveling alone, unfamiliar with the language or American customs…

[22] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 90.
[23] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 179.
[24] Hyman, "Eastern European Immigrants in the United States."

immigrant girls were easy targets for white slavers."[25] The NCJW combated the danger to Jewish girls by volunteering as probation officers in juvenile court—effectively becoming the "surrogate mothers" of these vulnerable Jewish children. NCJW members also escorted immigrant women from the docks to their families while providing single women with a transitional home.[26]

The growing awareness of female, Jewish immigrants leading "immoral" lives is reflected in the policies and decisions of Jewish childcare organizations. Responding to the concern that young women (so many of whom were the children of immigrants) graduating from Jewish orphanages were more likely to become prostitutes, the managers of Jewish orphan asylums like the JFH took extra steps to ensure that their female graduates left their institutions with a complete knowledge of how respectable woman behaved. The Jewish Foster Home attempted to keep their female wards from the danger of immoral lifestyles in a number of ways.[27] The method that the JFH relied on for the largest period of time was their indenture program. In his memoir, Jules Doneson described the way the indenture system worked differently for the young men and young women of the Home. He recalls that the care of the young women was overseen by the Ladies' Associate Board. He also remembers that while girls had, at one point, been discharged from the Home at fourteen, the policy was later changed so that girls lived within the Home until they were sixteen. Reena Friedman, a historian of Jewish orphanages in America,

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[25] Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council for Jewish Women*, *1893–1993* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 136.
[26] Rogow, *Gone To Another Meeting*, 137.
[27] The Jewish Foster Home's most creative program for training future homemakers was known as the "experiment at 426" and is addressed in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

suggests that this decision by the JFH's board was part of a larger trend as the managers of Jewish orphanages chose to keep their female wards under their direct supervision for longer amounts of time in an effort to keep them from making immoral decisions in order to support themselves.[28] Doneson goes on to explain that even after discharging their young people from the Home, the JFH stayed in contact with them, supporting them as they found jobs and places to live. For the young women, this support took the form of an individual "guardian" for each JFH graduate. Each guardian would visit her young charge as she sought a place of employment.[29] In this way, the JFH's model of guardianship resembled the NCJW's decision to accompany girls during life transitions (which made them vulnerable). Doneson described the way that the guardians of the JFH's Ladies' Associate Board continued to monitor the girls in his memoir:

> With the attainment of employment, the girl's wages were her own, subject to disbursements for personal expenses. Should her wages prove insufficient for living costs, the balance was contributed by the good ladies' group. There was a genuine concern that some girls might "go astray" to supplement their income, and the guardian and the committee exercised special vigilance until the girl attained the age of twenty-one, the point that represented the "danger line."[30]

Whether or not the female graduates of Jewish orphan asylums were especially likely to become prostitutes to support themselves remains unclear. The director of

[28] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 112.
[29] The Indenture Committee paid for the board and clothing of the young graduates of both genders.
[30] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 47.

the Hebrew Orphan Asylum (HOA) of New York, Solomon Lowenstein, argued against this assumption in his letters to Rose Sommerfeld, the head of the Clara de Hirsch Home.[31] Lowenstein, the HOA's superintendent, objected strongly to the idea that "the larger percentage of girls who go wrong are former inmates of [his] institution."[32] He wrote that "to his knowledge, only three of the HOA girls sent to the Clara de Hirsch Home were found guilty of sexual immorality, and he blamed two of the three cases on the girls' mother, who was 'unquestionably a sexual degenerate."[33] Leaving aside Lowenstein's judgment of the HOA wards' mother, it is clear from his letter that his role as the head of a large Jewish orphan asylum required him to combat this public perception. However, from his argument it also seems clear that young, female graduates of Jewish orphan asylums were not, as a group, more likely to "go astray."[34] It is also important to note, that from the records available, the JFH understood that young women turned to prostitution if they were without economic protection or training. The JFH sought to combat this danger by teaching the Home's female wards practical skills (even if those skills were limited to the domestic realm) and by providing them with guardians who would buffer them from any and all economic and social pressures for the first years of their adult lives.

The final aspect of the Jewish Foster Home's response to the increasing number of East European immigrants concerns the Home's shifting denominational

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[31] Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls was founded in 1897 by a group of Jewish leaders from New York (11 women and 2 men). It was funded by a large donation from the Baroness de Hirsch. The de Hirsch home housed young women in a comfortable and social environment while teaching them vocational skills. The managers sold the building in 1960.
[32] Solomon Lowenstein. Quoted in Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 113.
[33] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 113.
[34] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 47.

allegiance. The Home's founders belonged to a variety of Philadelphia's synagogues, and the annual meeting of the Board of Managers was hosted by many of these congregations. The rotating nature of these meetings meant that in 1863 Reverend Isaac Leeser, a representative of a more traditional American Judaism, spoke before the Home's managers, while in 1864 Reverend Dr. David Einhorn, a champion of liberal Judaism, addressed the group.[35] Reverend Fleischman, who later became the Home's superintendent, insisted that, "The first hint of a concession towards reform [was] given immediately after the reorganization [in 1874], when, with the assistance of the Rev. Morais and Rev. Dr. Jastrow, the children's daily prayers (all Hebrew) were revised by the introduction of some German prayers."[36] The identity of the Jewish Home continued to move closer to liberal Judaism when, in 1886, the Home's managers hired Reverend Fleischman and his wife to be the Superintendent and Matron of the Home. In his response to the advertisement, Fleischman wrote, "What do you ask of your Superintendent as to the religious education of your wards? I am liberal in my views." The president of the Home's board responded that the only qualification for the position was that the Superintendent be able to "bring up our wards to be good Jewish men and women."[37] Fleischman explained his vision of Jewish practice in his history of the Home: "Accepting the Biblical code rather than the Talmudical [*sic*], the holidays have been observed religiously, and the Sabbath celebrated rationally, but not in a puritanic [*sic*] spirit."[38] Under Fleischman's stewardship, the Home taught its wards a somewhat vague but

[35] Fleischman, *The History of the Jewish Foster Home*, 15.
[36] Ibid., 102.
[37] Ibid., 104.
[38] Ibid., 105.

obviously liberal vision of Judaism. However, with the arrival of increasing numbers of East European immigrants, Fleischman[39] and the superintendents who followed him began to slowly change the religious character of the Home.

The arrival of the East European immigration waves impacted all Jewish childcare organizations. Across the country, Jewish orphanages began to change how they were teaching Judaism to their wards. Reena Friedman notes:

> … in the case of Jewish orphanages… in the opening decades of the twentieth century, members of a new generation of directors took their places at the helms of these institutions, many of them of East European parentage themselves, and often former orphanages wards. Sensitive to the religious needs and cultural values of their charges and their parents, these directors introduced far-reaching changes[40] into the religious programs of their respective institutions.[41]

This kind of gradual integration of more Orthodox practices also appears in the JFH's records. In a report from 1920, a survey conducted by a representative of the Federation of Jewish Charities reported that the Home's kitchen did not have "separate compartments for milk, but all food articles [were] kept in covered containers."[42] This *halakhic* laxity seems to have been reversed when, in 1929, the

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[39] In his history of the Home, Fleischman notes that German was taught at the Jewish Foster Home from 1879 to 1893. He remarks that at that time it was decided that the Home needed to spend its time and resources teaching the large number of immigrant children English rather than German.
[40] These new changes included remodeling kitchens in order to make them conform to the dietary laws of *kashrut* and mandating the use of *tefillin* (phylacteries) and *kippot* (skullcaps). Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 147–148.
[41] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 147.
[42] Survey by the Federation of Jewish Charities, December 1920, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1938), MS 335/ box 4/ folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jewish Foster Home and the Hebrew Orphans Home officially merged.[43] While finalizing the merger, the two organizations agreed that the new orphanage would be known as the Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans (FHHO). Religiously speaking, the new FHHO would be run in accordance with traditional Jewish practice.

> RELIGIOUS PROGRAM: The curriculum of the religious school, the matter of conducting services in the synagogue, and the interpretation of Kashruth along traditional Orthodox Jewish lines shall be such as shall be approved by the Board of Jewish ministers of Philadelphia.[44]

This merger marked the advent of the observance of a number of Orthodox practices, including requiring the Home's children and staff to wear *kippot* (skullcaps) and *tefillin* (phylacteries) at daily services.[45]

Friedman argued that in the early decades of the twentieth century, as new immigrants became more established in America, many created charitable organizations of their own. These new institutions tended to be more traditional than those created by German Jewish groups. Friedman also identified a trend in the leadership of Jewish orphan asylums in the early to mid-twentieth century. She noted that in those decades, the heads of Jewish orphan asylums were often products of similar institutions.[46] The first superintendent of the Foster Home for

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[43] The Hebrew Orphans Home had been founded in 1896. In 1929, the wards of the Hebrew Orphans Home were absorbed into the JFHOA when the two organizations merged. After the merger, the JFHOA became the Foster Home For Hebrew Orphans (FHHO).
[44] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 74.
[45] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 148.
[46] Ibid., 147.

Hebrew Orphans was Herman Phineas Gumnit.[47] Gumnit and his wife, Sally, reflect this developing trend as both were graduates of the Hebrew Orphans Home.[48] It was during Gumnit's tenure that the FHHO underwent its final merger. In an official document submitted to the Court of Common Pleas in December of 1940, the merger is clearly delineated.

> AND NOW, to wit, this 24th day of December 1940, upon consideration of the within Application… the Court being of the opinion that the proposed Consolidation of Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans, Homewood School and Juvenile Aid Society into a single corporation, to be known as ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH CHILDREN OF PHILADELPHIA, is lawful… it is hereby ORDERED AND DECREED that the Articles are approved, and that upon recording of the Articles and the Order the consolidation shall take effect.[49]

The tenth article within this document was titled "Orthodox Jewish Faith" and specified that, "All children in institutions conducted by ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH CHILDREN OF PHILADELPHIA shall be cared for in accordance with the traditions and customs of the orthodox [*sic*] Jewish faith."[50] The more traditional Jewish priorities that were first seen in the discontinuing of German instruction and the intensifying of *kashrut* standards at the Home continued to develop in the later

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[47] Herman Gumnit was born in Russia in 1899. A product of the Hebrew Orphans Home, Gumnit served as the superintendent of the Pittsburgh Jewish Home for Infants before coming to the FHHO in 1932.
[48] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 80.
[49] Legal document of consolidation, 24 December 1940, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1938), MS 335/ box 4/ folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
[50] Ibid.

years of the Home's existence. With each merger, the Home was presented with the challenge of needing to serve a more diverse population of Jewish children and families. At each transition, the management decided that adhering to Orthodox standards would make the Home a more appropriate haven for Jews of all denominations.

The arrival of thousands of East European Jews changed the face of American Judaism irrevocably. The managers of the Jewish Foster Home saw themselves as a part of the established Jewish community of Philadelphia's response to their coreligionists need. Despite the altruistic intentions of these men and women, the aid from what Friedman calls the "Uptown Jews"[51] was not without its problems, and in many cases lacked any kind of sensitivity toward the specific heritage and customs of the immigrant population. The Jewish Foster Home (and its later incarnation as the Foster Home For Hebrew Orphans) grappled with some of the most critical issues to face the new immigrants: the breakdown of families and the question of how best to raise Jewish children, the threat to Jewish women's virtue and the Jewish community's moral standing, and the intra-religious tensions that existed between German and East European Jewish communities. While the records of the Jewish Foster Home do not reflect an instant or sweeping response to the arrival of the first East European Jewish child, the archives demonstrate that the Foster Home did indeed grapple with the needs of this new Jewish population, and that these efforts resulted in many gradual yet noteworthy shifts in the religious life and Jewish character of the Foster Home. The Foster Home changed as its

[51] Friedman, *These Are Our Children*, 132.

managers endeavored to meet the shifting needs of Philadelphia's East European Jewish immigrants. While this chapter has detailed the ways that the JFH reshaped itself in an effort to best serve a new population of Jews, the fourth and final chapter will investigate the kind of adults that the JFH worked to produce. Ultimately, a strong Jewish identity was only one part of what the Home's managers wanted for every child.

Chapter 4: Creating Useful, American Jews

From its very beginnings, the purpose of the Jewish Foster Home was to rescue Jewish children from poverty and then care for them in an environment that would shape their both their characters and their personal destinies. In the 1855 Constitution and By-Laws of the Jewish Foster Home Society, the female founders of the Home[1] explained that they hoped to shelter "destitute and unprotected children of Jewish parentage" by creating a home "wherein, orphans or the children of indigent Israelites may be rescued from the evils of ignorance and vice, comfortably provided for, instructed in moral and religious duties, and thus prepared to become useful members of the community."[2] Over the course of its ninety-five years of existence, the managers of the Home (in each of its incarnations[3]) saw the children who graduated as both members of a large family and the "product" of their institution. Therefore, the Home was both a place of refuge as well as a laboratory where its managers endeavored to produce good citizens and proudly identifying American Jews. This chapter will examine the values that were consistently prioritized by the Home's board.

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[1] The work of these women is explored in detail in Chapter Two.
[2] *Constitution and By-Laws* (Philadelphia: Rudolph Stein, Printer, 1855) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n5/mode/2up (accessed 9 March 2014), 3.
[3] As mentioned in Chapter One, over the course of the ninety-five years of its existence, the Jewish Foster Home was known by three different names. For ease of reference, the timeline of these name changes is included below: 1855–1874, The Jewish Foster Home (JFH); 1874–1929, The Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (JFHOA); 1929–1950, The Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans (FHHO).

In the editorial note that appeared with Rebecca Gratz's letter to *The Occident*, the newspaper's editor, Rabbi Isaac Leeser, wrote eloquently about the duty of the rich to provide for the poor. Near the end of his remarks, Leeser declared his conviction that by bettering the children who were brought to the home the community would concomitantly be contributing to the betterment of the society in which all live.[4]

> [S]ociety owes something more, much more, than merely providing prisons for delinquents, whilst it does so little, so nothing at all, if we may judge, to prevent crime, and to train those exposed to the danger of contamination in such a manner that they should benefit instead of injuring their fellow-mortals.[5]

From this first appeal to the benefactors of Philadelphia, the Jewish Foster Home set as a priority the rearing of children who, upon graduation, would go on to give back to their community. In simpler terms, the Home strove to produce children who were fundamentally "useful"[6] human beings.[7] The 1874 Charter of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (JFHOA) reveals that the superintendent's duties

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[4] It is interesting to note that Leeser did not believe that all children raised in poverty would become delinquents. Instead, he distinguished between the children of parents who value their role and their family and those whose parents neglected their care and education. For more about this distinction, see chapter three of this thesis.

[5] Isaac Leeser, "A Note By the Editor," *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (April 1850).

[6] The term "useful" had a specific definition within the field of social work. This definition was based on the belief that each person was responsible for adding to the collective. Because of this each individual was to be trained to be in some fundamental way "useful." For more information on this subject, see: *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work (Formerly, National Conference of Charities and Correction) At the Forty-Ninth Annual Session Held In Providence Rhode Island, June 22–29, 1922* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922).

[7] The value placed on being a useful human being was made literal in the presentation of an award of $5 for "General Usefulness" on the Home's prize day. For an example of this award, see: Annual Meeting of Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, 29 April 1900, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS 335/ box 3 / folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

included "supervis[ing] [the children's] education and attend[ing] to their moral training… see[ing] that they are as far as practicable employed in some domestic or other useful labor."[8] In addition to their training within the Home, all children also received positions of indenture.[9] In the 1899 Annual Report, Reverend Fleischman explained the indenture process:

> One of the objects for which the Home is maintained is to fit its wards for useful occupations. When they are ready to leave the Home they are placed in situations or indentured to Jewish families. If they fill their places satisfactorily, they are a benefit to their employers. In most instances the boys, and in all instances, the girls go to Jewish people, who in many cases are supporters of the Home. Thus these friends of the institution receive direct returns for the aid rendered the institution….[10]

The Home's patrons were proud of the practical preparation that its wards received while living under their stewardship. They were proud of the Home's indenture program and publicized its success. For example, a newspaper article published on January 1st 1924 proclaimed "Jewish Orphanage Trains for Success: 14-Year Record

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[8] Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, *Charter and Constitution of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Potsdamer & Co. Print, 1875), https://archive.org/details/charter00jewi (accessed 24 December 2013), 20.

[9] Upon reaching a certain age (the specific age varied over the history of the Home), children in the Foster Home would be placed by the Committee on Indenturing with businesses where they could work and learn a trade. These children were supervised and supported by the Home's board until they reached the age of majority. For more information see: Annual Meeting of Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, 30 April 1899, Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS 335/ box 3 / folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

[10] Annual Meeting of Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, 30 April 1899, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS 335/ box 3 / folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

Shows 425 Children Given Start in Useful Careers."[11] The article celebrated the results of the survey taken by the young men and women who had graduated from the Home between 1909 and 1923. The article concluded with the following explanation of how the JFH's wards compared with children from nuclear families:

> In his report Albert S. Marks, chairman of the Employment and Welfare Committee, said that the record of achievement by the boys and girls reared in the home and sent out into the world indicated that they were no less prepared physically and mentally than others of similar but more fortunate parentage. "Our records," he said, "show not only a normal standard of wage in all cases but exceptional cases of success in business ventures of their own."[12]

In 1936, the young women of the Home were given a unique opportunity to prepare themselves for their adult lives. In that year, a long-time board member, Blanche Kohn (Mrs. Isadore Kohn)[13] launched an innovative program for the girls of the Home. The 1936 president's report includes the following description of what came to be known as "the experiment at 426."

> A house near the Home [at 426 Church Lane], but away from the Campus, was rented and a very capable cottage mother was engaged… and in July of last year six very happy girls became its residents. A

[11] Philadelphia Jewish Orphan Asylum—Foster Home 1923–1934 Scrapbook, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania— Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-13, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.
[12] Philadelphia Jewish Orphan Asylum—Foster Home 1923–1934 Scrapbook, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-13, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.
[13] Blanche Kohn (1886–1983) was a renowned philanthropist. In addition to being a loyal supporter of the JFH, she was a co-founder the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia, an institution that is now the largest community school of the arts in the country.

> careful budget was worked out, and the money necessary to keep the household going was turned over to them each month. The girls are taught home-making and budgeting. They purchase their own food supplies—prepare all meals—do the household tasks—pay for the coal, gas, electricity and telephone—as they would if they were running their own home. They are also taught to be good neighbors. Each girl has a certain task to do and these tasks are changed about, so that every detail of home-making and management is made known to them.[14]

The "very capable cottage mother" was Mrs. Ethel Newman,[15] a widow and Pennsylvania native who was fondly remembered as "Aunt Ethel."[16] Newman, under the direction of Kohn and the JFH's managers, used the home as a "laboratory of living" where the Home's older girls could practice the skills that they would need after graduation. A young woman named Nancy Litt participated in this program and wrote the following about her time at 426 Church Lane:

> 426 was the only truly loving experience in my life growing up. Aunt Ethel was the perfect choice. She mothered us, taught us, loved us, all with the most wonderful sense of humor…. We liked to think of 426 as

[14] President's Annual Report, 1 March 1936, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS-335/Box 5/ Folder 1, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.
[15] Ethel Newman (born in 1879) was hired in 1936 to supervise the "experiment at 426" after she answered an advertisement for a "house-mother." She worked at the JFH until 1947 when she resigned. In his memoir, Doneson, a former ward of the Home, grouped her among what he called the "legendary staff members" of the Home. Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 132,
[16] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 104.

> a factory established for manufacturing homemakers, and also as a playhouse laboratory, where all the work is fun.[17]

Whether by placing their wards with Jewish businessmen or by designing a practical household simulation, the board of the Foster Home was determined to train their children to be useful members of society. By producing young adults who would not be a drain their community, the Home's managers sought to break the cycle of poverty that would have otherwise been their only inheritance.

This same goal was very obvious in an article that appeared in the *Public Ledger* on January 9th 1924. The article was titled, "Jewish Foster Home Aids Distressed Family." It told the story of a widow who was unable to support her mother and her five children. One son and two daughters were brought to the Jewish Foster Home while the rest of the family was cared for by another philanthropic organization. At the Foster Home, the three children received training which qualified them for a variety of jobs. The boy worked as a paperhanger for $25 a week, one girl worked in the office of a grocery store for $22 a week, and the other girl found a job as a stenographer that paid $18 a week. The article concluded with the following words: "These three children today are able to support the entire family of seven, due to the help they received at the Jewish Foster Home…."[18] No doubt, the founders and managers of the Home hoped that the stories of each of their wards ended this way—with the Home's children growing up to become self-sustaining adults who gave others support rather than requiring it themselves.

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[17] Ibid., 103—104.
[18] Philadelphia Jewish Orphan Asylum—Foster Home 1923–1934 Scrapbook, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-13, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

The second important value that the Foster Home's managers sought to instill within the children who were in their care was a strong sense of American patriotism. In 1905, Barney Allegro, a former resident of the Home and then the Chairman of the Alumni Jubilee Committee, gave a speech after presenting a flag from the Alumni Association.

> Today, a grateful Alumni has gathered in the dear old Home to bear testimony to this labor of love and to express in word and act the gratitude of the children. We have been taught here to love God, venerate our religion, serve our fellowman and to love our country. The stars and stripes are the emblems of liberty, but to none more than to my persecuted people are they the beacon of peace and happiness…. [The Alumni] are proud of our birthright as Americans.[19]

After accepting the Alumni Association's gift, Clinton Mayer[20] responded to Allegro:

> What more appropriate sight can there be for our little ones whom it is our first duty to rear in the spirit of American citizenship than the glorious American flag? … May we always be able to show those whom we may in the future have under our charge that this Alumni Association… have demonstrated to the world at large that they have accepted our first instruction, "Learn to be good Americans and Jews."[21]

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[19] Fleischman, *The History of The Jewish Foster Home*, 72.
[20] Clinton O. Mayer (1868–1956) served on many of the JFH's committees and was the chairman of the committee that organized the Jubilee celebration. In 1905 he was chosen as the solicitor of the Home.
[21] Fleischman, *The History of The Jewish Foster Home*, 73.

From Allegro and Mayer's remarks it is clear that the board of the Home understood that raising loyal and patriotic American citizens was a vitally important part of their institutional mission. Moreover, the children living in the home would be taught to appreciate the uniqueness of the American experience. At the same Jubilee celebration, the Honorable Simon Wolf,[22] visiting from Washington, spoke explicitly about the experience of being Jewish and American.

> …the prevention of the criminal lies in the educating of the child, and therefore, we American citizens of Jewish faith have a right to feel grateful for the opportunity that has been given us to prove by our labor and by our love that we grasp the responsibilities of citizenship, and are ready to advance along all the lines of civic duty, characteristic of the true Jew and patriotic American.[23]

These Jubilee speeches make it clear that while the Home was intended to help indigent children, it was also meant to show the world at large that Jewish Americans would not be a drain on the country. Through the Home's example, anyone would be able to see that Jewish Americans would "grasp the responsibilities of citizenship" and teach the next generation to do the same.

What it meant to be "American" obviously changed over the course of the ninety-five years that the Home existed, but for the children living in the Home

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[22] At the time, Simon Wolf (1836–1923) was a well-known diplomat and philanthropist. Originally from Bavaria, Wolf earned law degrees from both the University of Strasbourg and the Ohio Law College of Cleveland. President Grant appointed Wolf Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia, and President Garfield named him Minister to Egypt in 1881. Health problems soon brought him back to Washington, where he gained a reputation for his work on behalf of Jewish charities and communities. For more information, see Esther L. Panitz, *Simon Wolf: Private Conscience and Public Image* (New York: Associated University Presses, 1987).

[23] Fleischman, *The History of The Jewish Foster Home*, 76.

during the 1920s and 1930s, being a patriot appears to have required a deep love of the great American pastime—baseball. Two articles published on January 1st,1924, told the story of a group of boys from the Home visiting the home of Connie Mack,[24] the manager of the Athletics baseball club. The boys brought with them a gift to thank Mack for allowing them to attend "a number of the big games last summer. In return, Connie Mack gave them two dozen baseballs, autographed by members of his team."[25] In his memoir, Jules Doneson remembered that, "The owners of the A's set aside several Sundays during the season designated as 'Orphanage Days' and thousands of children from Philadelphia institutions converged… at Shibe Park as guests of the team and their own residential managers."[26] Doneson lovingly recalled the development of a baseball team at the Home:

> Professional baseball, and sports, in general, had a positive and lasting impact on the homekids…. The youngsters started a team of their own, carving out a baseball diamond from a gravel strewn playground…. In a few years, they were equipped and uniformed by the omnipresent angels. Competition with local rivals followed and the team participated in "away" games on other fields…. On their own diamond, knowing every pebble on the infield, and every hole and contour of the outfield, it was next to impossible for the adversary to win. Home field advantage was a truism.[27]

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[24] For more information on Connie Mack, see: National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, "Connie Mack," http://baseballhall.org/hof/mack-connie (accessed 26 December 2013).
[25] Philadelphia Jewish Orphan Asylum—Foster Home 1923–1934 Scrapbook, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-13, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.
[26] Jules Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 88.
[27] Ibid.

Participating in athletic clubs and attending the games of their favorite baseball teams allowed the wards of the Home to transcend what Doneson called the "stigma of living in an orphanage."[28] A love of baseball was something that the Home's children could share with their public school classmates. It was something that allowed them to relate to the world outside of the Home. While playing baseball, the Home's children were simply fervent fans of the sport that they believed every American loved.

The depth of patriotic feeling within the Foster Home's wards was remarked upon in Albert Marks' letter to the editor of *The Jewish Exponent* that was published on August 17th 1923.[29] Marks wrote that while on vacation in Philadelphia he had visited the Jewish Foster Home and attended the memorial service for President Warren G. Harding.[30] Marks described a "solemn gathering" which included a eulogy that linked the American and Prophetic traditions by reminding the listeners that "Mr. Harding had so consistently and conscientiously accepted as his creed, Micah, chapter 6, verse 8, 'Only to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with thy God.'" Marks closed his letter by writing, "Amid a silence that was very impressive, with eyes filled with tears, I am confident that the children appreciated the fact that this was a service, indeed, unusual and full of meaning."[31] The Home's memorial service for President Harding was also noted in other newspaper articles, one of

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[28] Ibid., 90.
[29] The letter was dated August 10th 1923 but was not published until a week later.
[30] President Harding died unexpectedly on August 2nd 1923 after a week of illness. His died after serving less two and a half years in office. For more information about his death, see: "President Harding Dies Suddenly; Stroke of Apoplexy at 7:30 P.M.; Calvin Coolidge is President," *The New York Times* (August 1923) http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0802.html (accessed 26 December 2013).
[31] Philadelphia Jewish Orphan Asylum—Foster Home 1923–1934 Scrapbook, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-13, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

which mentioned that the Home's flags would be placed at half-mast for a period of thirty days.[32] It is interesting to note that the Home's decision to place the flag at half-mast[33] for thirty days demonstrated to the JFH children a possible method of melding Jewish[34] and American mourning customs.

The Home's success in instilling patriotic values within its charges can be measured in many ways, but one of the most remarkable statistics is the number of Home alumni who served in the armed forces during World War II. In his memoir, Jules Doneson remarked that "Extraordinary performance by the 'homeguys' was the rule rather than the exception."[35] Doneson recounted the story of a former ward, Ralph Morrine,[36] who earned the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Silver Star, and Purple Heart:

> The news of Ralph Morrine's courage and heroism came as little surprise and immense pride to his relatives and friends. They shared in his belief that the "homeguys" had an edge. We had benefitted from the positive factors of communal upbringing and suffered minimally from the negative aspects. Where others complained, "homeguys"

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[32] Ibid.
[33] The first regulations for flying the flag at half-mast were not published until 1954. For more information, please see: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Flying the American Flag at Half Staff," http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/halfstaff.pdf (accessed 26 December 2013).
[34] In this case, the Jewish ritual the Home was observing was the thirty-day period of mourning, known as *sheloshim.* The custom of marking the first thirty days after a loss comes from Deuteronomy 34:8, which explains that the Jews wept for thirty days after Moses died.
[35] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 126.
[36] Born in Connecticut in 1917, Ralph Morrine enlisted in 1941. In 1943, he reacted heroically when the plane his crew was flying (the Idiot's Delight II) was damaged during a bomb raid in France. (For a report on the incident, please see: http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Te8ZAAAAIBAJ&sjid=-yIEAAAAIBAJ&pg=1945%2C1291401) Morrine died on February 13, 2000; he was eighty-three years old.

> accepted; where others questioned or resisted, ["homeguys"] led by example and force of will.[37]

Doneson went on to write that he believed one hundred and seventeen alumni of the Foster Home served in World War II, "many with distinction, all with honor."[38]

The most important goal of the Home, from its founding until its closure, was to implant within its charges a firm commitment to Jewish life. Having concluded that without their intervention these orphans and indigent children would be both morally and religiously deficient, the founders and subsequent managers of the Home identified Judaism as the tool through which they could genuinely improve their lives.[39] In his report during the 1899 annual meeting, Reverend Fleischman explained that the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (JFHOA) had long been modeled on an idealized Jewish family:

> The characteristics of the true Jewish Home are the devotion of parents to the children, the respect and the reverence of the children for their parents and superiors, the attachment of children for their home and for one another, that discipline which is neither seen nor heard, but which makes itself felt for good and that all pervading sentiment of veneration for things holy which is inspired by the practice of the Jewish religion.[40]

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[37] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 127.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Jewish Foster Home Society, *First Annual Report of The Jewish Foster Home Society* (Philadelphia: L. R. Bailey, 1856), http://www.archive.org/details/constitutionbyla00jewi (accessed 19 November 2013), 4.
[40] Annual Meeting of Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, 30 April 1899, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, MS 335/ box 3 / folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

Fleischman's report reveals that the Home was conceived of and run as if it was simply a typical Jewish family writ large. This model allowed the managers and staff to ensure that, while a child lived within the Home, his or her experience would be a distinctly Jewish one. According to the 1855 Constitution and By-Laws of the JFH, the day was begun and concluded with family prayer consisting of the Matron's recitation of the "Shemang," and every meal was framed by prayers of blessing and thanksgiving. Additionally, there were special rules for the observance of Shabbat,

> On Friday previous to the Sabbath, the children shall be bathed, combed and dressed,— [*sic*] the children shall then be assembled, when the Matron shall read to them the prayer for the Eve of the Sabbath; after supper they shall sing, '*Ayn Kalohaynoo* [*sic*]. In the morning, a portion of the Sabbath morning service and a chapter of the Bible from the portion of the day, shall be read by the Matron; to conclude with a hymn chanted by the Matron and children."[41]

After the reorganization, the superintendent became the highest-ranking member of the staff while the matron's role was diminished. In the 1875 charter of the newly christened Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (JFHOA), the same emphasis on Jewish time was altered to reflect the changes made to the Home's staff.

> [The Superintendent] shall assemble the children in a suitable room, and commence and close each day with family worship; the prayers to be alternately in Hebrew and English and Hebrew and German. He

[41] *Constitution and By-Laws* (Philadelphia: Rudolph Stein, Printer, 1855) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n5/mode/2up (accessed 9 March 2014), 9–10.

> shall be present while the children are taking their meals and see that a blessing is given before and thanks returned after meals.[42]

While the creation of the superintendent position meant that the matron would no longer lead family prayer, all "domestic arrangements" continued to fall under her purview. In this way, the matron was also responsible for maintaining the Jewish character of the Home. An example of the matron's responsibilities appears in the 1875 charter which states, "The culinary and dietary arrangements of the house shall be in accordance with Jewish laws."[43] The matron was the one who made sure that unacceptable food was kept out of the Home, "She shall take particular care that no food of any kind… is given to the children by visitors or others, without first passing through her hands."[44] By regulating the schedule and meals, the superintendent and matron fulfilled the roles of the parents for the Home's large Jewish family.

The Home's particular brand of Judaism seems to have reflected the multi-denominational nature of its patrons. In his history of the Home, Reverend Fleischman addressed the way that different Jewish voices had influenced the Home's management:

> Though members of various congregations were among [the Home's] founders, all these various congregations, if not orthodox, were conservative. …The First hint of a concession towards reform is given

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[42] Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, *Charter and Constitution of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Potsdamer & Co. Print, 1875), https://archive.org/details/charter00jewi (accessed 24 December 2013), 20.
[43] Ibid., 23.
[44] Ibid., 22.

> immediately after the reorganization, when, with the assistance of the Rev. Morais and the Rev. Dr. Jastrow, the children's daily prayers (all Hebrew) were revised by the introduction of some German prayers.[45]

Fleischman also recalled his response to the Home's 1886 advertisements for the position of superintendent:

> Before mailing [my] application, [I] wrote to the President, Isidore Binswanger: 'What do you ask of your Superintendent as to the religious education of your wards? I am liberal in my views.' The answer [I] received was this: 'All we ask of our Superintendent (in this respect) is that he bring up our wards to be good Jewish men and women.[46]

In 1929 the JFHOA merged with the Hebrew Orphans Home and became the Foster Home for Hebrew Orphans (FHHO). In this incarnation, "The curriculum of the religious school, the matter of conducting services in the synagogue, and the interpretation of Kashruth [all followed] along traditional Orthodox Jewish lines…."[47] Despite Fleischman's identification with liberal Judaism and the FHHO's well-known allegiance to Orthodox religious standards, over the course of the JFH's history, loyalty to any particular subset of Jewish observance was consistently less important than a commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people as a whole.

For ninety-five years, the managers of the Jewish Foster Home conceptualized the Home as a larger than average Jewish family. Using this model,

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[45] Fleischman, *The History of The Jewish Foster Home*, 102.
[46] Ibid., 104.
[47] Doneson, *Deeds of Love*, 74.

they, just like the parents of any other family, were required to pass down important values to their children. Their most important responsibility was to intentionally and thoughtfully usher their charges into adulthood. Over the almost-century of its existence, the Foster Home taught its wards many lessons and instilled within them many values. However, the most important thing an alumnus or alumna of the Foster Home could be was an eminently useful, enthusiastically American, and proudly Jewish human being. In order to emphasize this point, the chapter will conclude with an excerpt from a letter sent to the children of Home on September 5th 1907. The letter, which begins with wishes for the New Year, aptly summarizes the belief that, during their time in the Home, these children would receive everything that they would need to be productive, patriotic, and Jewish adults.

> Not every child has the advantages that are offered to all of you, and therefore, when it is shown that you all accept those opportunities in the spirit in which they are offered, with full appreciation of what is being done for you, and with love and respect to your foster parents and their associates, you will understand why those, who are in a measure responsible to the public for the results which you may achieve[,] can extend to you their heartfelt congratulations upon the expiration of a successful past, and the good wishes for the incoming New Year.[48]

[48] Clinton O. Mayer to the children of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum of Philadelphia, 5 September 1907, Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum, X-9, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

Conclusion

The Jewish Foster Home served Jewish children and their families for ninety-five years. From its modest beginnings as an orphanage caring for five children in a rented space, the Home evolved and grew until it occupied a historic mansion in Germantown that would at one point shelter almost two hundred children. The benefactors of the Foster Home aspired to make their institution a place where Jewish children could be cared for physically and spiritually. Over almost one hundred years, the Foster Home offered children a religious and Hebraic education, and provided them with a surrogate family made up of its wards, staff, and sponsors. Using this model, the Foster Home's patrons persistently attempted to create a structured environment wherein its young wards would be molded into knowledgeable Jews, good Americans, and contributing members of society.

This thesis sought first to provide a broad survey of the Jewish Foster Home's history while also placing the institution within the larger context of mid-nineteenth century American childcare models. The first chapter of this thesis examined the ways in which the JFH reflected and anticipated national trends and attitudes. This historical survey served as the foundation for the following chapters' more nuanced examinations of specific aspects of the institution's life.

The second chapter of this thesis focused on the female founders and patrons of the JFH. An examination of these women's lives shows that the Home had been founded by a group of wealthy and philanthropic women who were well-versed in

the management of benevolent organizations; indeed, this analysis has found that women played a vitally important role in the overall history of the Home, although the nature of this role evolved over time. The Home's founders—Rebecca Gratz, Anna Allen, Emily Phillips, and thirteen others—had amassed a great deal of experience in orphanage work even before they dedicated themselves to the establishment of the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia. Motivated by the desperate poverty of Jewish families as well as their fear that Jewish children would be preyed upon by Protestant orphan asylums, these women worked for years to establish the funding and communal interest necessary to establish a *Jewish* orphanage. In 1855, they successfully created such an institution—the Jewish Foster Home. For the first nineteen years of the Home's existence, these women were in charge of every aspect of the institution—deciding everything from which butcher to patronize[1] to which Jewish prayers should be recited and by whom.[2] The women who ran the JFH during its formative years were connected by blood, marriage, and social standing. Their work at the JFH reflected the values and concerns of middle- and upper-class women of their era—many of whom saw philanthropic work as a socially acceptable and proper vehicle for establishing themselves as leaders of their communities. Ultimately, the women's administration of the JFH was supplanted by a men's board in 1874. This transition, explored in chapter two, reflected the JFH's need to appeal to a broader base of supporters and

[1] Visiting Committee Reports, 11 June 1855, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum (1855–1933), MS 225/ box 4/ folder 2, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
[2] *Constitution and By-Laws* (Philadelphia: Rudolph Stein, Printer, 1855) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n5/mode/2up (accessed 14 March 2014), 9.

to the JFH's male patrons' financial savvy and resources. Despite being officially removed from power in 1874, female philanthropists continued to be loyal supporters of the organization. Even in the last decades of the JFH's existence, female patrons and volunteers remained a critical component of day-to-day life at the Home.

The third and fourth chapters addressed another important theme running through the history of the Jewish Foster Home of Philadelphia—the institution's unstinting commitment to raising good Americans as well as committed Jews. In the ninety-five years that it cared for Jewish children, the JFH continually refined its vision of the ideal American Jew. The staff, managers, and patrons of the Home adjusted their concept of the ideal graduate in light of various events and movements—none so influential as the arrival of the massive immigration waves of East European immigrants (beginning in the 1880s). Suddenly confronted with Jews who looked and sounded significantly different from themselves, the Jews of Philadelphia shifted the focus and techniques of the JFH in order to meet the needs of their newly arrived coreligionists. The ideal "product" of the Home was an ever-evolving concept, and this fluidity of vision reflected the pressures of both internal and external influences.

In spite of the current lack of scholarship on the institution, the history of the Jewish Foster Home offers many instructive lessons. An analysis of the JFH's development over the years can and does provide a more nuanced portrait of nineteenth- and twentieth-century gender roles, social services, methods of childcare, urbanization, and immigration. Similarly, it is important to note that the

story of the Jewish Foster Home also sheds light on the evolvement of philanthropy and benevolent work over the course of the American Jewish experience. By highlighting the women and men who devoted both their time and resources to the JFH, this study seeks also to focus on the larger conversation concerning the historical role of philanthropic organizations in general. The amount of time that the JFH existed as well as the number of the Home's records that have been preserved allow the Jewish Foster Home to serve as an effective lens through which one can study various aspects of American Jewish history.

Thomas Carlyle[3] famously insisted that "The history of the world . . .[is but] the biography of great men."[4] Most contemporary historians reject Carlyle's assertion and insist that a more efficacious methodology for reconstructing the past is to examine and document the lives and experiences of the everyday people who struggled to confront life's daily challenges. Most of the wards of the Jewish Foster Home grew up to be ordinary men and women, some of whom raised families of their own. Some (like those mentioned in chapter four) fought heroically during World War II; others became doctors and nurses who cared for their communities as their predecessors had cared for them. The Jewish Foster Home was an institution that exemplified the most ordinary aspects of belonging to a community, but its "ordinary" nature is exactly what makes it relevant and important. The JFH serves as a lasting reminder that membership in a community comes with responsibilities as well. This thesis concludes with the preamble of the 1855

[3] 1795–1881
[4] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1905), 18.

Constitution and By-Laws of the Jewish Foster Home Society of the City of Philadelphia in the hope that its words will serve to remind all communities of the work still left to be done.

> Deeply impressed with the necessity of providing a home for the destitute and unprotected children of Jewish parentage, the Ladies of the several congregations of Philadelphia have associated to form an institution denominated "the Jewish Foster Home," wherein, orphans or the children of indigent Israelites may be rescued from the evils of ignorance and vice, comfortably provided for, instructed in moral and religious duties, and thus prepared to become useful members of the community.[5]

[5] *Constitution and By-Laws* (Philadelphia: Rudolph Stein, Printer, 1855) https://archive.org/stream/constitutionbyla00jewi#page/n5/mode/2up (accessed 14 March 2014), 3.

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