

# Mercy on Rude Streams: Jewish Emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine to the Lower Mississippi Region and the Concept of Fidelity

by

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**C**an an act of implied rejection actually be an act of affirmation? Is it possible to remain faithful to one's country by leaving it? In the mid to late nineteenth century, Jews left the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in eastern France and emigrated to the American South, particularly to the area along the Mississippi river. At least one wave of emigration can be interpreted as rejecting the onslaught of encroaching German hegemony after 1871 rather than a repudiation of the French heritage of which they were proud.

This study attempts to identify how Jewish emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine to the United States perceived the notions of fidelity and infidelity; that is to say, the diverse ways of pledging allegiance to their new country as well as maintaining some ties to their native land. Instead of loyalty or disloyalty, the terms of "fidelity" and "infidelity" have been chosen because the former notions have political connotations associated with citizenship. Fidelity, too, may convey political associations, particularly loyalty to a country and to its laws, but it also connotes affiliations especially to values as well as cultural and religious traditions. Fidelity implies memory, an attitude toward the past that opts for continuity that remains a discrete element on the adjustment to a new environment in a new country. Thus it overlaps with the concept of the maintenance of tradition.

Typically associated with acculturation, the antonym infidelity is understood as leaving one's country, surrendering alle-

giance to the native land, and foregoing the regular practice of familiar language and cultural habits. The process entails various degrees of acculturation to the ultimate level of assimilation into the new society. While certainly such adaptation took place among the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine in the Mississippi region, because it is a theme historians have treated in depth it will only be discussed briefly here.

Viewing Jewish emigration from Alsace-Lorraine in relation to the poles of fidelity/infidelity modifies the perspective of the immigration historiography that finds “that the masses of immigrants brought no sense of nationality to America with them, only local identities and allegiances.”<sup>1</sup> Although coming from two regions linked by history, the immigrants under discussion identified with the nation and culture of France. In this particular case, leaving one’s country was in some cases a way of refusing to see the nationality of *(Alsace-Lorraine instead of German, more accurate)* changing from French to German. Emigration may have provided a means for remaining loyal to one’s national identity even while improving economic options. Because emigrants formed new Jewish communities, the fidelity/infidelity matrix also gave shape to the group’s re-identification, a solidifying reconstruction of memories to serve the needs of belonging in the new environment. That is to say, fidelity to the image of a past culture and place of origin contributed to senses of unity and belonging among people from the same European place of origin in America.<sup>2</sup>

Although historians may consider the notions of fidelity/infidelity relevant to characterize the process of immigration, the distinction between the two in the minds of the immigrants themselves was fairly tenuous. Oscar Handlin perhaps emphasized the theme of a radical departure from the past most vigorously in the once commonly accepted but now controversial, *The Uprooted*. But the breakdown of the European experience did not solely define the immigrant perspective. Jewish immigrants were also fleeing poverty, cultural and political domination, the numerus clausus, mandatory military services, and French and German anti-Semitism. Although all of these reasons for leaving were negative, they did not necessarily reflect a rejection of the original

French nationality or identity.

The body of this work is the result of a series of interviews collected mainly from families living in Louisiana and Mississippi whose forbears hailed from Alsace-Lorraine, or from transfrontier marriages in Baden, Palatinate, or Bavaria. Even if family members live outside the South today, their origins in the United States fell in the area under consideration. Through their meetings and newsletters, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience facilitated the research by providing opportunities to acquaint the author with these Alsace-Lorraine descendants. The responses of individuals to questions about their European roots gave meaning to exchanges and information ascertained from family memoirs.

When set against archival data, the interviews collected in the 1990s serve as a way to reconstruct the interviewee's own personal history even though some of that oral history may be apocryphal. Both the factual and the mythical are of interest in the questions raised about the uses of historical reinvention. As David Thelen analyzed, "People sometimes construct their personal life histories as a record of stability, continuity and consistency". The historical study of memory would be the study of how families, "searched for common memories to meet present times."<sup>3</sup>

Since the publication of Alex Haley's *Roots* in the 1960's, searching for identification with one's country of origin has become a central preoccupation for many Americans. The increasing enthusiasm for genealogical trees and the history of the family's descendants has followed. Current generations have undertaken the pilgrimage back to see their place of origin as a search for a kind of spiritual dual citizenship. These descendants have attempted to reconnect to the language and to any remaining family members left behind by an earlier generation.

The diaries and interviews show the ambiguity in perceptions as the emigrants consciously and unconsciously attempted to come to terms with the notions of fidelity and infidelity. Many tended to view the emigrant either as unfaithful to country and family or as independent and alert to opportunities for self-improvement.

*Citizenship: The French and German Legal  
and Political Backgrounds*

Several flows of Jewish emigration to lower Mississippi communities from Alsace-Lorraine and the German states of Palatinate, Wurtemberg, and Bavaria occurred. The first emigrants arrived in the lower Mississippi region in the 1820s, choosing to settle in New Orleans and in a number of small towns including Port Gibson, Natchez, and Vicksburg in Mississippi; and Shreveport, Plaquemine, and Opelousas in Louisiana. Family genealogies provide evidence that in the 1840s Alsatian branches had bonds with southern Germany, in particular the towns of Landau, Kayserlautern, Speyer, Gernersheim, Ingenheim, and Bade-Wurtemberg. These neighboring countries maintained ties that transcended political borders. This European background frames this record even as it somewhat blurs the boundaries of national loyalties.

From 1801 to the second Treaty of Paris in 1815, a few western German states came under the rule of the Napoleonic empire. In 1871, the situation reversed itself as Bismarck's victories and conquest reconnected Alsace-Lorraine with the Reichsland, a situation that remained until the end of World War I. But France, planning to regain control over its lost provinces, never accepted German claims. Caught between the two, Alsace and Lorraine share a specific identity because of their key locations, their double French-German history, their own dialect, and their common traditions.

Initiated in the 1850s and formalized in 1889, the French law to obtain citizenship known as *jus soli*, or "the law of soil," has been enforced with some modifications. This law granted French citizenship to any foreigner born on French soil. This stood in opposition to the prior *jus sanguinis*, or "the law of blood," which provided citizenship as a result of parentage. The 1804 Napoleonic code had given prominence to the *jus sanguinis* as the founding principle of the French law. Ironically the *jus soli* provides a stronger social link with the country. According to historian Rogers Brubaker, the *jus soli* illustrates a nation deeply rooted,

secure, and ready to assimilate its inhabitants. Some of the speakers in the 1889 legislative debate wanted to extend the *jus soli*. They emphasized the fact that children born in France from foreign parentage and who resided in France had French ways of thinking, French habits, and the natural ties felt for one's country of birth.<sup>4</sup>

The extension of citizenship to the second or third generation of immigrants was not due to demographic or military reasons, but was instead a response to ideological and political issues. The exemption from military service of foreigners living in France countered the Republican doctrine of the universal draft, and in the 1870s became a prominent issue in the border regions when Frenchmen were drafted while foreigners who were long settled in the same regions were exempt. The social resentment that intensified at that time became resolved in the 1880s when the definition of citizenship was broadened. The Republic's program of compulsory primary education coupled with the universal draft, reinforced and extended the *jus soli* and its implications for a committed citizenry.<sup>5</sup>

The process of assimilation raised a number of questions, especially the opportunity provided to be a productive citizen. When a citizen's own country shows itself incapable of providing a citizen work or the opportunity for economic advancement, then denigrates an individual's dignity through discrimination, does that not constitute a breach of the unwritten contract between the two? If so, when the citizen leaves his country, is he or she violating that contract, or is he or she justified in doing so?

#### *The Emigration Background*

Dating to the twelfth century, the Jewish communities of Alsace and Lorraine flourished in a largely urban environment until the end of the fourteenth century when the great plague forced the people to scatter along the Rhine. By the sixteenth century only a hundred families remained in Alsace. Then during the eighteenth century Jewish communities reshaped themselves under the French monarchy that tolerated their presence for eco-

nomic reasons, but confined them mainly to small towns.<sup>6</sup>

The monarchy made exceptions for rich Jewish families, particularly money lenders. Traditionally known as “Court Jews,” these people were permitted to reside in the cities. The Cerf Berr family in Strasbourg, one of the “Syndics Généraux (*accents*) de la Nation juive,” or representative of the Jewish nation in Alsace, typified the upper class Jewish family. The Berrs played key roles in the representation of Jews by introducing their requests and in supporting their emancipation in 1791. Still Alsatian Judaism remained rural up to the middle of the nineteenth century. According to historian Vicki Caron, “in 1851, only 24% Jews in Alsace-Lorraine lived in the capital cities of their districts. Between 1871–1872, 31% did so.”<sup>7</sup> Before the 1789 French Revolution the building of synagogues was officially forbidden. But as Gilbert Weill noted, “in 1784 half of the Lower-Rhine Jewish communities had their own synagogues.” This was an indication that communities often made arrangements during the eighteenth century with local authorities. After the emancipation and First Empire, Jews erected nearly a hundred synagogues.<sup>8</sup>

In Lorraine, Jewish communities faced the same obstacles to development as in Alsace. They maintained a separate religious status from the Christian population, but the richest Jews, such as money lenders, grain merchants, and cattle dealers, maintained economic and financial relations with the Christian population. Only the city of Metz, capital of Lorraine, comparable to German cities such as Frankfurt or Mainz, remained an exception. A prominent Jewish community existed in Metz since the eighteenth century which had attained a population of fifteen hundred before the revolution. It had maintained a Talmudic school since 1705, and in 1764 a Hebrew printing house was founded in the city. A vocational school for Jewish children trained one hundred students as craftsmen in 1824. Three years later, the rabbinic school for France was created there.<sup>9</sup>

Especially in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Jewish population doubled from five to ten thousand in Lorraine, Jews also began to scatter throughout rural communities. Poor, overcrowded, regularly plagued by famine, and without

any economic future, this rural population provided the most important source of emigration to the United States.<sup>10</sup> A famous example was Leon Godchaux, the Louisiana sugar planter whom some considered a "sugar king." He had left the small town of Herbeviller close to Lunéville (é) in Lorraine in the 1840s to come to Louisiana.<sup>11</sup>

Beginning in 1791, Jews could become citizens and integrate mainly because of an influential enlightened elite and the attitude of the successive government leaders despite an infamous decree. According to that decree, "no Jew can start any commerce, any trade, practice any exchange, without obtaining an allowance granted by the 'préfet' (é *accent*) [administrative head] of the district and with the agreement from the town board certifying that the Jew did not practice any usury or unlawful trade."<sup>12</sup> Between 1808 and 1815, all the debts due to Jewish moneylenders were no longer enforceable or collectable. At the time of emancipation, 8,000 Jews lived in Lorraine, 20,000 in Alsace, 40,000 in the rest of France.

The elite, 'préfets' (é *accent*) (governors of the district) as well as Consistoires (boards of administrations composed of laymen and rabbis who maintained Jewish cemeteries and synagogues), supported the creation of Jewish schools and the more prosperous ones helped to furnish them. An 1833 report on Alsatian Jewish schools, for example, listed fifty-two communal Jewish schools and an indefinite number of others. Nonetheless the report noted that the overriding problem of poverty crippled the teaching in the miserably maintained schools. Teachers received meager salaries and parents could not afford spending a lot for their children's education. These conditions prevailed even though the role of the Jewish teacher was of considerable importance, and school attendance was quite good.<sup>13</sup> Most emigrants had gone through primary school until the age of fourteen and then possibly attended a year of secondary education. Jews spoke Judeo-Alsatian (a combination of Alsatian, Hebrew and German) and French. The vocational training school, or "Ecole du Travail," provided the lower class the opportunity to obtain skills in numerous crafts including jewelry, engraving, printing, woodwork, tailoring, and

upholstery. Some emigrants had earned a professional qualification at the Strasbourg School of Art and Trade. The latter was the path that Léon Cahn (*é accent*) of Saverne followed. He was a tapestry-maker who mastered his trade as upholsterer and draper. He started his craft in Strasbourg in 1861 and left for New Orleans four years later with his wife and three children.<sup>14</sup>

An additional burden faced all male citizens in the form of the seven-year conscription, but this was even heavier for Jewish people. Napoleon's infamous "Article 17 of the Decree of March 17, 1808 compelled Jews to do military service without allowing them the right enjoyed by other citizens of finding somebody to replace them."<sup>15</sup>

In 1871 the Prussian victory in the Franco-Prussian War resulted in German rule. Many started leaving the area for political reasons. Such departures were highly significant because anyone failing to complete his German military service was deprived of his German citizenship. Generally the cultural definition of German citizenship explicated by philosophers and further developed by German historian Theodor Mommsen was based on the law of blood as opposed to the law of the land. German anti-Semites used ethnological, linguistical, and historical reasons to argue that the Jews were foreigners to the German nation and therefore did not deserve the same rights as other citizens.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas five thousand Jews chose to leave Alsace for France and an undetermined number went to the French colony of Algeria, a high proportion chose the United States as its destination.<sup>17</sup> Vicki Caron calculated that between 1873 and 1914, "63 percent of all the district's Jewish emigrants to the United States came from towns with populations under two thousand inhabitants while Jews from towns between five thousand to ten thousand inhabitants were almost equally divided between the New World and France."<sup>18</sup> According to census bureau statistics, in 1870, 40,938 Jews lived in Alsace and Lorraine. Forty years later, 30,483 were counted. Approximately one half (5,000) of the difference in the population migrated to the United States. This figure may be low in that it does not account for children born during the period who may have migrated.<sup>19</sup>



This considerable departure to America in this contextual framework partly reflects fidelity to one's native France, a country which had afforded its Jewish citizens substantial rights and opportunities. The act of leaving may also have been a way of expressing an alternate form of fidelity—the fidelity to oneself, to one's thirst of adventure, and the need to experience other worlds particularly at a time of governmental change. This article is not arguing that economic and political factors did not play the major part in causation but rather that the issue of fidelity requires consideration as well.

Alsations emigrated to Hungary, Russia, and Poland during the first Empire (1799–1815) as well as to North America for various reasons, as the historians Pierre Leuilliot and Nicole Fouché note. Such movement increased from the end of the eighteenth through the end of the nineteenth centuries. One of the great waves of emigration from Alsace was caused by the succession of failed harvests between 1818 and 1827. The agricultural crisis persuaded a large number of people working in rural areas to leave. Approximately 10 percent of the population of northern Alsace and 3 percent of the Lower-Rhine population (about 14,000 people) chose to emigrate to America during these years. Between 1828 and 1831, the industrial sector experienced a similar situation with 14,365 emigrants leaving the Bas-Rhin (*e not right*) for the United States.<sup>20</sup> The districts of Saverne and Wissembourg surrendered the largest number of emigrants. For the Upper-Rhine districts emigration occurred between 1838 and 1857. During these years of rural exodus, famine, epidemics, and overpopulation (11,397 , *new figure I check again*) emigrants left. In 1866, out of 58,970 inhabitants of the Lower-Rhine, 23,116 left the “département,” (*é accent*) with 4,144 emigrating to America.<sup>21</sup> But, as historian Jean Daltroff observed, “emigration between 1840 and 1880 was to get away from an uncertain future.” With the economic and social upheavals, “the traditional professions of the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine such as money-lending, brokerage and peddling were significantly affected.”<sup>22</sup> Banks sprang up and individual money lending began to wane. The growth of capitalist-inspired industry also con-

tributed to the decline of the traditional trades, asserted historian Vicki Caron. The very act of emigration itself had a “snow ball,” or “pull” effect for those who stayed behind. The German and Swiss emigrants crossing the Rhine to board ship at le Havre offered a model to the Alsatian population.<sup>23</sup>

The French government legalized emigration in 1855 and set the price of the passport and the railway ticket. In 1866, after the government established emigration agencies, fifty-seven official recruiting agents were located in the Bas-Rhin. Some agents were Jewish, such as Felix Klein of Niederrodern (Bas-Rhine), who was extremely active between 1864 and 1869 organizing voyages for his fellow Jews to New Orleans. How many of these Jews came to the South is hard to determine. However, one indication is that approximately 10 to 18 percent of those graves identified along the Mississippi had left Alsace and Lorraine during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>24</sup> German Jews, for their part, had to face greater administrative and social discrimination besides harder obstacles to emigration in the form of high taxes. The end of legal discrimination in the German states varied between 1860 and 1868. It was finally abolished in April 1871 by the Reich law.

Many young conscripts, slightly more than 10 percent of a total of eleven hundred, left between 1874 and 1897 from the District of Mulhouse. These young men gave up their Alsace-Lorraine citizenship to avoid enlistment under the law passed in 1874 and left for America. Of 118 people, eight said they were going to America, without being any more precise; seven reported for South America; and ten indicated they were headed for the southern United States or more precisely Texas or Louisiana. Most opted for New York and other northern or western states. None indicated they were leaving for California.<sup>25</sup> (*I suppress unconvincing because I found lately other lists*)

*The Winds of Freedom, Modernity, and Emancipation for All*

Apart from the economic and political problems, more specific cultural reasons encouraged emigration. Avraham Barkai, who has analyzed German Jewish immigration to the United States, observes how often the decision to emigrate was a sign of embracing emancipation, the effect of the Age of Enlightenment, and the secularization of German society: "in a way, the decision to emigrate, to leave one's family ties, one's community, to leave one's obligations behind, was the first sign of this development and of its influence on young people, the least conservative and the most enterprising part of German Jewish society."<sup>26</sup>

Philip Sartorius is a good example of this quest for emancipation in terms of independence and economic opportunity. He prepared himself to emigrate partly by learning French, which proved of great help during the crossing and later when he settled. Sartorius came from Germersheim, Palatinate, Bavaria. In 1910, he wrote an account in English for his daughter, after the death of his wife.<sup>27</sup>

Emigrants often had to wait and minors had to obtain their parents' permission. Immigration formalities required a certificate of good conduct from the schoolmaster, and the court had to certify that the individual had no criminal record. The emigrant also had to be sure that a member of his/her family or a relation in the new country would be able to get him/her a job because, as Léon (*é accent*) Geismar, who left in July 1909, said,

"there is no future with the current state of affairs." "I mean to stay in America and get American nationality." He claimed to be able to join his uncle's trading business and become self supporting. "Please give me permission to leave," he begged.<sup>28</sup>

Young women emigrating to America "had no future at home if they didn't bring with them a sizable dowry," wrote Max Meyer, who emigrated to New York from Wissembourg in 1890 and later became the founder of the sewing trades union and of the Fashion Institute of Technology. In America, a girl could become a nanny even at the age of 16.<sup>29</sup>

Although the first emigrants wrote back urging people to

come to a land of glamorous opportunity and a glittering future, emigration between 1871 and 1918 was largely the result of internal factors. Max Meyer's father, for example, had fought for the French in the Franco-Prussian war and found it unbearable to see his son doing military service in the German army. As Max recalled, "My father trembled at the thought that his son would soon be enlisting in the German army. It would have been absolute torture for a French patriot." Max therefore left for New York at the age of fourteen his entire family. Paradoxically, he was able to remain a French patriot when leaving Alsace for the United States and to retain contact with fellow French Jews.<sup>30</sup> His statements are very much emblematic of what the Alsace-Lorraine emigrants thought about their social environment, German domination, and the Franco-Prussian war. The Geismar family emigrated for similar reasons. "My grandmother Séraphine," (*é accent*) explained Flo Geismar-Margolis, "did not want to bring [her son] up in a German environment."<sup>31</sup>

Rejecting German citizenship, these people were extremely proud to receive American citizenship. Max Meyer, who had to wait seven years for naturalization, wrote in his memoirs, "The day that I would finally swear allegiance to my country arrived. I left the Court of Justice as a proud and happy citizen." He added that he would use his citizenship generously "in the hope of playing an active role in making this city a better place to live in."<sup>32</sup>

#### *The Ritualized Departure*

To be successful in his/her departure and to be able to adjust to the new society required advanced preparation. To be accepted either by his/her family and by the his/her community, the emigrant's departure, in particular, had to be ritualized in various ways. Although leaving constituted a break, it was tolerated and authorized by families so long as it was generally carried out within what became cultural norms. Without such rituals, it could be considered as an infidelity to the family as well as national laws and practices. The ritual of separation is exemplified in Isaac Lévy's diary. (*é accent*) On November 27, 1891, three days before

his departure, he wrote that he had not been cast out of his social circle and that social links continued despite his leaving. "All day I've been having people visiting me, coming to say good-bye. It's often said that it's when someone goes off on a voyage that he can see how well liked he is. Well, I can leave with my mind at rest, I don't think I've left a lot of enemies. People have been coming to see me from all over the region." He received a large number of presents. His mother was "mad with grief" but the separation trauma was at least somewhat alleviated.<sup>33</sup>

In 1891, Edmond Uhry, son of a merchant in spices and notions, emigrated to New York from Ingwiller (*instead of Ingweiler*) (Alsace) in 1891. In his memoirs of 1946 he noted, "Parents of this era wonder how those of that day could bring themselves to send to the four corners of the earth their teenage boys. Each mile of distance equaled ten of today. Ocean travel was slow and dangerous and the expectation of a *Wiedersehen* (return) more remote than now. And yet nearly every family in our town sent boys into the world. Wherever one from a town would settle, others from the same district would join him. New Orleans was the first point of destination for most of the early émigrés from our section." Uhry continued, "[I] vividly recall the gloom at the Seder table with the empty chair of the first born, and also the feeling of responsibility I shared through the importance of secrecy in this matter." About his family's reactions concerning his brother's journey, he wrote, "My brother Moïse came to New York in 1886. I still can feel the state of anxiety that hung over the family during the ten days of his crossing. Mother prayed throughout days and nights. When a cable announced his safe arrival in New York, I galloped through the streets to broadcast the good tidings."<sup>34</sup>

As the youngest child, Philip Sartorius' positions in the family increased the trauma of leaving. Emigration meant leaving his aged parents alone, thus breaking a sort of filial commitment. His mother was extremely upset on the day of his departure but he, on the other hand, felt no regret at the fact he would never be seeing them again; "just like a young boy, I thought of it like going on a picnic." Only sixty years later did he realize the meaning of what he had done and the suffering it meant for his par-

ents. "I had no idea of how great a step I was taking nor of the pain it would cause my family. I was the youngest."<sup>35</sup>

The Geismar family lived in Grüssenheim (*I add ii*) (Haut-Rhine) but sent their son Léon to do his studies in Reims, France. His uncle, Louis Benjamin Geismar, had arrived Louisiana in 1874 and become the owner of vast tracts of land around the hamlet of Geismar. Léon beseeched his uncle to take him to America. The young man's parents, Salomon and Séraphine, (*é accent*) only allowed him to leave after a family council in which they listened to the uncle's dire warning, "What are you going to do? Keep him here? He'll be killed in the next war!" Isaac Lévy's (*é accent*) written from 1886 to 1895 describes his departure on December 13 1892, at the age of 22, from Lembach (Bas-Rhin) (*no e*) for New York. He had delayed the event for a year because he feared that his mother would take to her bed for a second time, just as she had done when his brother left five years earlier. He filled out all the necessary papers including his travel contract and passport, and waited until his family agreed to his departure.<sup>36</sup>

As tragic as some of these partings appear, historian Avraham Barkai discusses ways in which the break was somewhat alleviated; "contact was continually kept up with friends and relations in Germany through letters and financial support. The young emigrants thought of themselves, as in fact they were, as in many ways the pioneering vanguard which was going to open up the way for the whole family, clan and even village to come on over."<sup>37</sup> Correspondence proved to be a partial, nonetheless fundamental, substitute for absence.

In later years books, diaries or journals were written by the immigrants.<sup>38</sup> The memoirist wrote to tell the story to the family, but the act of writing and the book or memoir itself was also as a sort of emblem, an inheritance, and a reference point linking the new family with the old. The immigrant or his spokesperson bridged two worlds, the land left behind and the new. The journals were attempt to translate the emigration experience for future generations and thus became an additional medium of fide-

ty.

*How to be Jewish, Alsatian, Lorrainian,  
and Southern Simultaneously?*

Besides maintaining ties, the immigrants also adjusted readily to their new environment. As historian Lloyd P. Gartner writes, "There has been no American Jewish history without assimilation." "And by assimilation," observes historian Abraham J. Peck, "Gartner does not mean the end of the Jewish identity, nor its diffusion. On the contrary, he defines the term as a necessary process of socialization, that by which a minority acquires a number of values and practices from the majority group." What is lost and what is kept, or rather what does the emigrant eventually "find"? One's identity and allegiance is not something granted ipso facto but is acquired through a gradual cultural process.<sup>39</sup>

Whether they settled in small towns or in cities, immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine carefully maintained their own Jewish traditions, collecting funds for temples in hamlets and towns along the Mississippi and elsewhere as soon as twenty to thirty families congregated. As in the early life of any typical Jewish community, the synagogue structurally and functionally represented the nucleus of the great majority of the activities that defined Jewish life.<sup>40</sup> Men and women believed that being active members of their congregation met their social needs and simultaneously demonstrated their allegiance in a manner similar to their Christian neighbors. The group had to remain coherent to buy a piece of land for the cemetery, raise funds to found a congregation or rent a house to use as a synagogue and religious school; in other words, to establish community institutions. Tzedakah was a guiding principle of the faith, an integral concept of Jewish ethics. By participating in the raising and dispensing of funds for the poor or sick, the immigrants expressed both their religious attachment and their sense of community. Moreover, being actively involved with the Jewish community allowed former Alsatians to mingle with those who hailed from places such as Germany, Poland,

England, and Russia.

Congregations of Alsatian-Lorrainian and German origin began to be established in the 1820s after the earlier, albeit far smaller, Sephardic emigration from the West Indies took place at the end of the eighteenth century. The rites “conformed to the customs of the German Israelites.”<sup>41</sup> Port Gibson exemplified these trends. The town provided a nurturing environment for a vital community along the Mississippi consisting of Jews from Lorraine and Alsace, and later from East Europe. In 1859, twenty-two charter members formed Congregation Gemiluth Chassed (House of Kindness). Many congregants including the Klotz, Mayer Levy, Marx, Unger and Ullmann families were Alsatian or married to Alsatians. The congregation purchased land for a cemetery in 1871, and twenty years later held services in a newly-built Byzantine revival synagogue nestled securely on Church Street among the city’s Protestant houses of worship. Nearly 18 percent of the people buried in the Port Gibson cemetery were from Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>42</sup> Alexandria, Louisiana’s congregation was founded in 1861, and Opelousas in 1877 where a few Jewish Alsatian families still remain. One of the most flourishing communities in late nineteenth century Louisiana was Donaldsonville. More than forty emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine descent were buried in its cemetery, Bikur Shalom, established there in 1868. Gaston Hirsch, who emigrated from Saverne, Alsace, to Donaldsonville in 1946, took care of the cemetery until his death in 1994 at the age of eighty-five. He was considered the keeper of the community’s Jewish history.<sup>43</sup>

The booklet commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Congregation Gates of Prayer in New Orleans, as well as the minutes of the congregation, emphasized the essential emigrant paradox: remaining patriotic to France and being truthful to the religious customs and rites learned in the Alsace-Lorraine region, while adjusting to a new country. “The early constituent parts of the Minyan that led to the founding of the Congregation Gates of Prayer were without a doubt, German and Alsatian Israelites, the latter while being patriot of the patriots, holding allegiance to France, were nevertheless more familiar with the language of the



Rhine countries. They adhered tenaciously to the religious customs of the land of their birth. Each incoming ship brought accessions to their ranks—brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces etc. and thus usages were perpetuated—customs and observances, inborn as they may be termed, observed to the letter.”<sup>44</sup> The constitution, by-laws, and records were kept in German until 1888. The congregation, also called the “old Lafayette Schule,” was traditional and obeyed the German ritual until the Reform forces prevailed. A school was established by the congregation in which the children were taught the Pentateuch, Hebrew, and German. Two Alsatians were presidents of that congregation, David Wolbrette in the 1880s and Leopold Levy in 1901<sup>45</sup>

When the more assimilated members of the Jewish community founded the city’s first Reform congregation, Temple Sinai in 1871, a number of Alsatians and Germans joined, Salomon Marx among them. Born in Mainz in 1831, Marx was related to the Kahn family originally from Mommenheim (Bas-Rhin). Moving to Temple Sinai meant giving up the traditional Orthodox ritual. Before joining Temple Sinai, Alsatian born Abel Dreyfous belonged to a more traditional synagogue. “Reform Judaism was really ethics,” his nonagenarian granddaughter, Ruth Dreyfous asserted.<sup>46</sup>

Did that mean that Reform Judaism was more easily adopted by professional, elite Jews because it was less conspicuous than Orthodox Judaism, and closer to the Protestant orderly worship? Is this more evidence of assimilation? Historian Arthur Herzberg explains, “Everywhere, the religious institutions themselves were rapidly being adjusted to the American scene.” “Congregations became affiliated with the Reform movement where ‘moderate’ reformers were creating respectable Judaism. In the American environment the new Reform congregation was far different from the immigrants first established which was at first a carbon copy of those they had left behind in the town or the village from which they had come.”<sup>47</sup>

Such affiliations did not inhibit good relations between founding members of Temple Sinai and more traditional Jewish relatives and friends abroad. While in Europe, Salomon Kahn vis-

ited a relative with whom he corresponded for many years, Zadoc Kahn. Zadoc Kahn served as Grand Rabbin de France, or head of the French Rabbinate, and ardently supported Captain Alfred Dreyfus.<sup>48</sup>

*From Religion to Social Actions: An Ethic for Responsibility*

Many Alsace-Lorraine emigrants felt a responsibility to be actively involved in Jewish social organizations. David Wolbrette, born in Alsace in 1853, was a member of the Touro Infirmary board in New Orleans. Others in the city were members of the Widows' and Orphan's Home founded after the yellow fever epidemic of 1853. Salomon Marx was one of the most active. "During the terrible suffering and desolation incident to the several epidemics of yellow fever here in that period and notably of those of 1867 and 1878, Mr. Max was laboring conspicuously, fearlessly and consciously in the cause of Relief." In the 1890s at least two members of the Auxiliary Association of the Widows' and Orphans' Home were Alsatian emigrants. In 1921 the fidelity to social engagement was carried out by Jonas Hiller and Joseph Loeb, respectively first and second vice president of the Jewish Home. These men were representative of the second and third generation of emigrants from eastern France.<sup>49</sup>

The numerous philanthropic and social societies were very popular among Jews from Alsace-Lorraine. They belonged to Jewish and non Jewish organizations including the Masonic lodges, Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, and the Harmony Club, which originated from the "Deutsche Company" and whose purpose was "to foster sociability, patronize science and art and promote fellowship." Successful professional men such as Lazare Levy (originally from Strasbourg), Felix Dreyfous (whose father, Abel, came from Belfort), and Solomon Marx joined or founded prestigious men's clubs in New Orleans as further proof of integration.<sup>50</sup>

The process that led to involvement in charitable and social associations coincided with their commitment to public and political activism. These factors mixed with dedication to the place

where Alsatian-Lorrainian Jews lived and their sense of values. Born in 1854 near Reichhoffen and emigrating in 1874, Solomon Klotz served as general postmaster and mayor of Napoleonville, Louisiana. Léon Geismar, who was born in 1894 in Grüssenheim (ii) and who emigrated at the age of 15 to New River Landing, was elected member, then president, of the police jury for nearly forty years. Felix Dreyfous, a noted attorney in New Orleans, served two terms in both the state legislature (1888–1892) and city council (1896–1900). “The dinner table conversations were extremely important in shaping my perceptions and goals,” explained his daughter, Ruth, “because of my father’s interest in and dedication to the city of New Orleans. We always shared political talk, and it was from my father’s sense of responsibility—from his seeing a need for political reform—that we inherited his strong sense of values: that success comes from living honestly with integrity, not from making money . . . that’s why he fought against the scandalous state lottery when he served in the legislature.”<sup>51</sup>

Sometimes the values and ways of adjustment were not as one might accept today. Before the Civil War, as successful business people in the South, some Alsatians and Lorrainians owned slaves like others of their social and economic circumstances. For example, according to the 1860 census and the slave schedule in New Orleans, Leon Godchaux owned four slaves. Gustave Bier, a Bavarian jeweler, married to Estelle Godchaux from Reichhoffen, Alsace (*Estelle is from Reichhoffen not Gustave Bier*) owned five slaves. Philip Sartorius bought a slave. In 1850, only thirty-two Jews owned 113 slaves. A decade later two hundred slaves were owned by seventy-two Jews (17 percent) in New Orleans. This is far less than historian Bertram M. Korn’s 25 percent estimate for the same period but still substantial.<sup>52</sup>

There were few Jews in the South before the Civil War and even fewer slave owners,” wrote Babette Wampold, who also mentioned that her great grandfather, Jacob Ullmann, who moved from Hechingen in Palatinate to Port Gibson, Mississippi in 1850, owned two slaves.<sup>53</sup> Even if a minority of Alsace-Lorraine emigrants owned slaves, others also profited from the system. Abel

Dreyfous registered thirteen slave transactions in 1848 as a notary public. Between 1851–1852, he notarized fourteen slave sales. Among them, there were four Jewish slave owners. Even if some Jewish professionals did not own slaves, they participated as members of a society that accepted slavery.

Participation in southern life involved support for the Civil War. Jews fought for the Confederacy to display their loyalty to their adopted region as well to protect their homes. With few exceptions, they became southern patriots. Philip Sartorius, among others, enlisted in the Confederate army in Natchez and, following the defeat in 1865, had to swear allegiance to the Union. Lucile Bennet's great grandfather, Alsatian born Salomon Hochstein, joined the Housa Guards in Louisiana at the age of 36. Another emigrant from Alsace, Isaac Hermann, born in 1838, came to New York in 1859, settled in Georgia, joined the Confederate army in 1862 even before he became a citizen, and later lived in Sanderville. His *Memoirs of a Confederate Veteran* (1911) commemorated his activities during an era in which such memories were being glorified. When he enlisted, he took the place of his friend Mr. Smith, a rich planter who had adopted him. According to his biographer, Sallie Monica Lang, Hermann went up to the duty officer, declaring "a Frenchman wishes to fight like an American."<sup>54</sup> This example shows how the desire to integrate meant paying your debt to the person and place that welcomed you even as you identified also as a Frenchman. It also reflected dual fidelity.

The war was not easy. Philip Sartorius recorded in his diary the pitiful state of the boats and lack of preparation. He belonged to a troop of cavalry in which the soldiers had to supply their own equipment and food. The war destroyed many cotton and sugar plantations of families from Vicksburg, Jackson, and New Orleans. All of the Kahn's family wealth, wrapped up as bales of cotton in Jackson warehouses, was destroyed. Metz Kahn mentions his grandmother, Fanny Strauss Bloom from Mommenheim in the Bas-Rhin, who lost a child during the battle of Jackson in 1863. Southern families had to contend with having their homes ransacked by their own army, and sometimes owed their lives to swift intervention by neighbors. "To give you an idea what van-

dals our soldiers were, we had a fine safe when we left. We left the door open but they cut holes in it as soon we had gone." Philip Sartorius' wife continued, "We sacrificed everything to the Confederacy, my husband was wounded."<sup>55</sup>

### *Economic Paths*

Vocationally, many immigrants started as peddlers. Success often came rapidly for those who rose out of these ranks to form what Metz Kahn called, "peddler aristocracy." Others began by using their skills at intermediary trades. In a context that was both different and yet similar to the old world, they imitated their fathers and conducted business as merchants, a trade for which a need sorely existed in the mid-nineteenth century South. They supplied the cotton plantations in Mississippi and the sugar plantations along the river, sold cotton bales to ginning factories, participated in the different stages of cotton processing, and became commission brokers. Buying the merchandise on credit and paying after the harvest in the form of commissions or once they had made money, cotton factors lent money to the planters. Hermann Kohlmeyer, whose family came from Lembach, is a financier who continues his business today with many southern planters, and between the South and the English cotton-importing ports such as Liverpool. The individual might become a cotton or sugar plantation owner thanks to the customer's inability to sustain mortgaged lands. Some families became well-known for their plantations: the Kessler-Sternfels Cora sugar estate in Texas, Godchaux in Reserve, Susan Weil in Lavonia for cattle, and the Lemann's in Donaldsonville.

Somewhat different routes were followed by other Alsace-Lorraine emigrants. "They went around plantations as traveling merchants, while others used their savings to open up stores," Gaston Hirsch wrote in his letters<sup>56</sup>. Describing earlier Alsatians, he explains the process of adjustment, "after a few years they would open up a general store, where all kinds of dry goods were sold to local inhabitants." Their children attended schools, and many had the opportunity to study law, business, and

medicine. By the third generation some of the grandchildren of the immigrants entered professions such as medicine, dentistry, law, real estate, and psychology.

Others started as store clerks and become managers of prosperous retail or wholesale department store. Such families included the Sharffs from New Orleans, the Wolffs in Washington, the Lemanns in Donaldsonville, and the Fraenkels from Baton Rouge. Some of these and other families remained in business. Other careers started with buying a small store and mortgaged lands which became plantations. The Klotz, Geismar, and the Hirsch-Posner families illustrated this pattern with members of the third generation becoming professionals. Abraham Levy was born in 1854 in Duppigheim (Bas-Rhin). His descendants are split between Strasbourg and Paris, and New York and New Orleans. Levy went to school in Strasbourg and left for Baton Rouge in 1854 at the age of seventeen. He spent his first two years working as a peddler before joining with Max Fraenkel with whom he worked until 1881 when he left to work with Henry Feitel. He then opened up a small store in St. Rose in the Mississippi parish of St. Charles, and, thanks to his "ability to grasp what was required of his business, to react rapidly to the demand and by using good business practice, he became the owner of a large department store." The family moved to New Orleans in 1930 where it became part of the well-off society of the city. The great grandchildren are real estate investors and doctors. There are also examples especially in the cotton business where occupations have been transmitted across generations.

A third pattern is rare. It is the route followed by two or three families who became professionals in the first or the second generation, mainly in the legal arena. This occurred in cities like New Orleans. In 1888 Edgar Mayer Cahn became a lawyer in the second generation, as did Moïse Dennery in the 1930s, whose family owned a bakery supply business begun in the 1890s. An unusual example was Abel Dreyfous. Dreyfous emigrated in 1831 from Belfort to New York, where he learned English, and then went to New Orleans where, eleven years later, he became a notary public, first as a partner and then, after 1864, in his own right.

He ran one of the biggest practices in the city with his son, attorney Felix. Because Louisiana followed the French Napoleonic code, notaries play a prominent role alongside attorneys. Felix' daughter, Ruth, followed in her father's footsteps as an active member of New Orleans' civic culture. A founder of the League of Women Voters and member of the city's welfare board, she also served for many worthy causes especially those devoted to civil rights.<sup>57</sup>

Not all became rich. Poverty was not rare, but it was not often described with the sincerity of Albert Fraenkel who recalled the difficult days his family lived through, with his father having somewhat modest means. What appears remarkable is not just the way the emigrants were able to adapt to a totally different world to the one they knew, but also the shakiness of the cotton, sugar, and corn businesses. Fortunes could also be wiped out by the Civil War, by the Mississippi floods of 1893 and 1927, or by the Depression of the 1930s. Each time they had to start all over with the same single-mindedness. Gaston Hirsch summed it up well in one of his letters: "The Alsatians, Lorrainians and Germans in Louisiana and Mississippi can be proud of their success in business, industry, medicine and especially proud of their success and their patience."<sup>58</sup>

#### *Adjustment Mechanisms*

The choice between emigrating to large cities like New York, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago and San Francisco, or small towns like those along the Mississippi was made pragmatically.<sup>59</sup> An uncle, cousin or brother gave an individual a start. Such chains of migration were typical adjustment mechanisms for immigrants. However in Louisiana, the large population of French emigrants and German farmers may have also played its part in both attracting these Jews and easing adjustment. "The German Coast," also called "Allemands," included the parishes of St. John the Baptist, St. James, and St. Charles along the Mississippi. This association with German Christians is somewhat paradoxical when one recognizes that these emigrants were in

some ways departing a region taken over by Germany. A distinction was being made between rejection (infidelity) of the government and relations between people. They had been neighbors who interacted through commerce. Many of the German Americans already in Louisiana may have emigrated as a result of the failed revolution of 1848 and thus shared other things in common with the Alsatians-Lorrainians.

Furthermore it was not unusual for Alsatian-Lorrainians to intermarry with individuals from Palatinate and Baden-Wurtemberg. This tradition continued even after the families moved to the South. Such interaction and intermarriage was facilitated because the immigrants usually spoke German and French, and French was often spoken. This proved to be a pull for a number of emigrants in the 1840s. If English was the official language in business, trade, law, in schools, official papers continued to be written in French until the end of the Civil War. French remained widely spoken into the 1930s, especially in the Cajun country in southwestern Louisiana. Their French background was very helpful, too, for the first emigrants who settled in the Louisiana territory because it had belonged to France and Louisiana was still influenced by the Napoleonic code with which they were familiar.

Examples of the language continuity abound. General Butler's Union troops had already occupied New Orleans in 1862. According to his recollections, Felix Dreyfous had to sing the national anthem at the public school. Although only seven, Dreyfous refused, was expelled, and attended different private French language schools instead. Through the years, he learned perfect French pronunciation. When he visited his family after World War I, "the European family could not believe that Felix's perfect French pronunciation could have been acquired out of France" according to his daughter, Ruth. She remembered the way her grandmother and she bid each other good night: "Bonsoir chère grand-mère, dormez bien", "dormez bien chers enfants, dormez bien." (*I have corrected the accents which were wrong*) Ruth, who died in 1998, understood a lot of French but did not speak it well. She recalled that her father could not stand to hear her poor pronunciation. As a child she heard French spoken when her grandmother



and her father were together even though her mother was of German descent. But Ruth Dreyfous also claimed about her grandfather's house and family; "He was more French than he was Jewish. Only French was spoken in his house. The cooking and everything was French."<sup>60</sup>

Eugene Franck who had emigrated from Soultz-sous-Forêts in 1870 at the age of fourteen, "spoke without any foreign accent but was very French in sentiment, often sang in French to his grandchildren, gathered Sunday morning at his bed side."<sup>61</sup> Ruth First, Abraham's Levy descendant, talked nostalgically of her grandfather's sweet French voice. "It was more than a language," stated attorney Moïse Dennery. Recounts Metz Kahn, "Not many people speak French now. Fifty or so years ago, a lot of people spoke French. Some of the store signs in New Orleans said 'Ici on parle français' (*ç, if you have it*))[French spoken here]." Flo Geismar-Margolis lived in New River Landing-Geismar, along the Mississippi near Gonzales. Her father spoke German, Alsatian, English, French and Cajun, although she only speaks a little French herself. She remembers, "when I was at school, it was important for me to learn to read and write English to get into university."<sup>62</sup> While French was the majority language in that part of Louisiana at the turn of the century, it lost its influence and became the language frequently spoken at home. Nonetheless French sentiment remained and thus served as a reflection of fidelity.

#### *A French Mississippian Lifestyle*

In many ways beyond language usage the immigrants maintained their French heritage even as they adjusted. Cooking combined French and southern modes. Many families compiled their own recipe books. Some became professional cooks and created a popular French cake in New Orleans, the multi-layered French Doberge adapted from Austrian Dobos Torta. In 1933, during the Depression, Beulah Ledner, Abraham Levy's daughter, opened a bakery which became very successful and served the socially prominent gentlemen's Boston Club where Jews were not admit-

ted as either members or guests. The multicultural shop sign read, "Irish cream Doberge!, Kugelhopf, Chocolate delight et beaucoup plus." Ledner's pastry was a mixture of French *éclairs*, *mille-feuilles*, (- *between the two words mille and feuilles*) brioche, Alsatian, and Creole cooking reflecting the diversity of the Louisiana culture, and the French and German branches of the Abraham Levy family. Starting as a typical French bakery, it became more eclectic later.<sup>63</sup>

Furniture could be Napoleonic Empire or southern antebellum style. Many displayed China vases, and tea or coffee services from France. French clocks indicated the style and rhythm of the homes. These could still be found at the Dennery and Dreyfous homes at the end of the twentieth century, and were part of the French way of living.

Meals for the upper class were kept formal with everyone well dressed especially for the midday main dinner. Each dish was served separately just like in France. While cooking combined Louisianan, Creole and French traditional food, the way it was served more than the contents reflected French culture. For Friday night these Jewish families ate gumbo, clear soup, fish and dessert. Saturday morning meant a breakfast of grits, bacon, and oysters.<sup>64</sup> These formal meals are still evident for special celebrations in these Alsatian-Lorrainian upper class families.

### *Conclusion*

In 1920, fourteen per cent French-born Americans was Alsatian or Lorrainian, with relatives having left their region while it was under German rule between 1871 and 1918. Today the descendants do not consider themselves (*I suppress necessarily*) an ethnic group. No doubt their departure from the same area influenced them during two or three generations. Although many of them have now blended into American life, traces of French allegiance remain. Some are looking for their roots in Alsace-Lorraine. They have retained contacts through correspondence, genealogical trees, ancestors' photos, furniture, an interest for history as well as for antiques, and the feeling of coming from a coun-

try with a past and culture even if it is mythically fancied as a traditional land where nations have never stopped fighting. Today, if differences can be made from other groups of immigrants it is mainly in subtle variations in the ways of living, dressing, language, and a type of ethic and esthetic refinement reflected in interviews. These bonds of fidelity, however tenuous in the long run, should not be forgotten by historians as another measure of the immigrant experience.

# NOTES

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3 Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozetta and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Fall, 1992): 9.
- 5 <sup>2</sup> David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989): 1117–1129.
- 6 <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1119–1121.
- 7 <sup>4</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "From Immigrant to Citizen: How Jus Soli Asserted Itself in France at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* (September 1993): 3–25. The Historic New Orleans Collection, Tulane University Special Collections, the Touro Infirmary Archives (for patients of French origin), and American Jewish Archives collections provided valuable sources as did visits to Louisiana cemeteries and synagogues with descendants of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine.
- 11 <sup>5</sup> Brubaker, "From Immigrant to Citizen."
- 12 <sup>6</sup> Freddy Raphael and Robert Weyl, *Juifs en Alsace* (Toulouse, 1977).
- 13 <sup>7</sup> Vicki Caron, *Between France and Germany; the Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, 1871–1918* (California, 1988).
- 14 <sup>8</sup> Gilbert Weill, *Connaître et Gérer un Patrimoine Rural; Les Synagogues de Basse Alsace* (A.M.J.A.B., 1990), 1–6.
- 15 <sup>9</sup> *Les Juifs Lorrains; Du Ghetto a la Nation, Exclusion, Integration, 1721–1871*, Catalogue d'exposition (Association Pour la Conservation du Patrimoine Juif, Metz, 1990), 114–132; Pierre-André Meyer, *La Communauté Juive de Metz au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Nancy, 1993).
- 17 <sup>10</sup> *Les Juifs Lorrains*, 107–108.
- 18 <sup>11</sup> Thomas D. Clark, "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55 (June 1966).
- 19 <sup>12</sup> Napoleon issued two decrees in 1808 to reorganize the religion and a third decree imposed limitations on civil rights for ten years. The "more judaico" oath had to be sworn when appearing in court and the obligatory enlistment continued. Whereas the Catholic Church was subsidized before 1830, Jewish organizations were not. This last measure was eliminated in 1848.
- 22 <sup>13</sup> Jean Kahn, "500 Ans d'Histoire juive de Haguenau; La Citoyenneté des Juifs d'Alsace Après Napoleon," *Etudes Haguenauviennes* 18 (1992): 15–22; Raphael and Weyl, *Juifs en Alsace*, 354–359; Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace; Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1991), 98–116.
- 25 <sup>14</sup> Leo Cahn Family Collection, Small Collection 1530, American Jewish Archives. (All personal and family collections are from this archive unless otherwise indicated.)
- 27 <sup>15</sup> This decree was no longer enforced after the fall of the First Empire in 1815.
- 28 <sup>16</sup> Paul Smith, "A la Recherche d'Une Identité nationale en Alsace, 1870–1918," *XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Avril-Juin, 1996): 23–35; N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, "Is Alsace German or French? Answer to Mommsen, Professor in Berlin (1870)," in Raoul Girardet, *Le Nationalisme Français, Anthropologie, 1871–1914* (Paris, 1983), 64–65. Under the German Reich, being a civil servant or an army officer was difficult for Jews with the establishment of a quota, whereas French Jews were entering the political arena at the same time. See Pierre Birnbaum, *Les Fous de la République; Histoire Politique des Juifs d'Etat de Gambetta a Vichy* (Paris, 1992).
- 33 <sup>17</sup> Michael Marrus, *Les Juifs de France à l'Epoque de l'Affaire Drefus* (Calmann-Levy, 1972; reprinted Paris, 1985), 48. Raphael and Weyl estimate that Alsace lost over 25 percent of its Jewish population or about 9,230 people between 1871 and 1905. *Juifs en Alsace*, 486.
- 35 <sup>18</sup> Caron, *Between France and Germany*, 86.
- 36 <sup>19</sup> Statischen Bureau des Kaiserlichen Ministeriums für Elsass-Lothringen, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für Elsass-Lothringen, 1913–1914*.
- 37 <sup>20</sup> Leuilliot and Fouché, *L'Emigration Alsacienne aux Etats-Unis, 1815–1870* (Paris, 1992), 57.
- 38 <sup>21</sup> Jean-Baptiste Migneret, *Description du Département de Bas-Rhin* (Strasbourg, 1871), 2.
- 39 <sup>22</sup> Jean Daltroff, "L'Emigration en Amerique des Juifs d'Alsace Lorraine," *Liaisons* (Bulletin of the Israelite Consistory of the Moselle, 401994), 22–24.
- 41 <sup>23</sup> Caron, *Between France and Germany*; Fouché, *L'Emigration*, 58.
- 42 <sup>24</sup> In the Port Gibson, MS, cemetery there are 17 Alsatian tombs out of 133, or 12.6 percent of the total. (100th Anniversary Celebration, Gemiluth Chessed Synagogue, Port Gibson, MS, 1991). At the Opelousas, Louisiana, cemetery, there are twenty-four Alsatian tombs out of 44169, or 13 percent. Benjamin Kaplan, *The Eternal Stranger* (New Haven, 1957). The figures for Donaldsonville are forty-two out of 192, or 18.5 percent (Gaston Hirsch list).
- 46 <sup>25</sup> D. Dreyer, "Liste des Haut-Rhinois ayant Emigré entre 1871 et 1918," MS 7, 14, Haut-Rhin Archives. The Reich law of May 2, 1874, stated that men who left German territory but who did not take a new nationality were obligated to do military service. A number of former residents gave up their nationality when visiting their families in Alsace-Lorraine to avoid enlistment.
- 49 <sup>26</sup> Barkai, *German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York and London, 1994), 1–14.
- 50 <sup>27</sup> See also Freddy Whahl, *Confession et Comportement dans les Campagnes d'Alsace et de Bade, 1781–1939* (Strasbourg, 1980).
- 51 <sup>28</sup> Léon Geismar Collection, 25266, AD of the Haut-Rhin.
- 52 <sup>29</sup> Ruth Meyer Cherniss, "Introduction," in *Max Meyer, 1876–1953* (n.p., 1980). The author wishes to thank Ruth Meyer Cherniss, Max's daughter, for graciously providing a copy of this book.
- 54 <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Max Meyer is related to the Sartorius family on the mother's side as well as to Metz Kahn's family, all residents of the Mississippi Delta area. Max's mother, Pauline Strauss Meyer, was the sister of Joel Sartorius' great grandmother, Fanny Strauss Asher. Family members lived in Natchez and Jackson.
- 57 <sup>31</sup> Flo Geismar-Margolis interview, conducted by Anny Bloch, New Orleans, September 8, 1992.
- 58 <sup>32</sup> Cherniss, *Max Meyer*, 116.
- 59 <sup>33</sup> Isaac Lévy's Diary, translated from the German by Maurice Wolff, 1990. The original belongs to Ernest Levy, Isaac's son, and to his grand daughter, Lauren Levy.
- 61 <sup>34</sup> MB: Edmund Uhry, "Galleries of Memory," typescript E, Leo Baeck Institute (New York, 1946), 146–147.

1 <sup>35</sup> Recollections of Philip Sartorius, 1910.  
2 <sup>36</sup> Geismar-Margolis interview; Lévy diary.  
3 <sup>37</sup> Barkai, *German Jewish Immigration*, 39.  
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6 <sup>38</sup> See for example, Abel Dreyfous' letters written in French and translated into English, 1849–1890; Recollections of Sartorius; Rosine Weil  
7 Cahn (1837–1909) "Recollections of the Weil and Cohen Families," 1906.  
8 <sup>39</sup> Peck, "That Other 'Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South," *Modern Judaism* 7 (May 1987): 199–214.  
9 <sup>40</sup> "Communications," *Génération et Filiation* (Paris, 1994), 59.  
10 <sup>41</sup> Kaplan, *Eternal Stranger* 42, 62–63.  
11 <sup>42</sup> Marx Family Papers, flat file, cabinet 5, drawer 14, American Jewish Archives; Kenneth Hoffman, *The Jews of Port Gibson; A History of*  
12 *Temple Gemiluth Chassed* (Utica, MS, 1991).  
13 <sup>43</sup> Hirsch cemetery list.  
14 <sup>44</sup> Fiftieth Anniversary, Congregation Gates of Prayer; 130th Anniversary, Congregation Gates of Prayer, 1850–1980; and Gates of Prayer  
15 Congregation Minutes, Tulane University Special Collections. MB: ADD: About two hundred Jews from northern Alsace who left in the late  
16 1800s are buried in the largest Jewish cemetery in New Orleans according to the records of the Hebrew Rest Cemetery Association and this  
17 author's visit to the cemetery in 1998.  
18 <sup>45</sup> Gates of Prayer Congregation Minutes, January 7, 1866.  
19 <sup>46</sup> Ruth Dreyfous interview, conducted by Anny Bloch, September 23, 1992.  
20 <sup>47</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America; Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York, 1989), 116–117.  
21 <sup>48</sup> "The Samuel World Family of Osyka, Mississippi," Abraham Metz Kahn Collection.  
22 <sup>49</sup> "David Wolbrette," *The Book of Israelites of Louisiana; Their Religious, Civic, Charitable and Patriotic Life* (New Orleans, 1904), 127.  
23 <sup>50</sup> Paula Hyman, "Des Juifs d'Alsace," in Pierre Birnbaum, *Histoire Politique des Juifs de France* (France, 1990), 35.  
24 <sup>51</sup> "F. J. Dreyfous was instrumental in persuading others to join the anti-lottery coalition  
25 . . . As a freshman state legislator, his father wrote the anti-lottery bill for the House." F. J. Dreyfous opposed the Louisiana lottery because  
26 the lottery brought wealth to the private group of men while it took money out of the pockets of some of the state's most poorly educated  
27 and economically impoverished citizens." Ruth Dreyfous, "It Has Been Interesting My Life," (typescript, New Orleans, 1995) and idem. with  
28 Bobbie S. Malone, "The Life of Felix Jonathan Dreyfous, 1857–1946 (typescript, New Orleans, 1995).  
29  
30 <sup>52</sup> Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865* (Elkins Park, PA, 1961).  
31 <sup>53</sup> Babette Wampold to Anny Bloch, Montgomery, AL, August 17, 1993.  
32 <sup>54</sup> Letter dated June 26, 1926, American Jewish Archives.  
33 <sup>55</sup> Recollections of Sartorius.  
34 <sup>56</sup> Hirsch to Anny Bloch, August, 17, 1993  
35 <sup>57</sup> Deeds of the practice are located at the Historic New Orleans Collection and the Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University. Dreyfous,  
36 "It Has Been Interesting My Life;" Dreyfous with Malone, "Integrity and Service."  
37 <sup>58</sup> Gaston Hirsch to Anny Bloch, August 17, 1993.  
38  
39  
40  
41 <sup>59</sup> Oscar Handlin, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 1980); Heinrich Neu, "Elsass-Lothringer als An-  
42 siedler in Nord-Amerika," *Elsass-Lothringesche Wissenschaft zu Strassburg* (Heidelberg, 1930).  
43 <sup>60</sup> Dreyfous with Malone, "Integrity and Service."  
44 <sup>61</sup> "The Samuel World Family of Osyka."  
45 <sup>62</sup> Abraham Metz Kahn interview, conducted by Anny Bloch, September 8, 1992 (Kahn is a native of Baton Rouge whose family originat-  
46 ed from Alsace and Germany); Flo Geismar-Margolis interview, conducted by Anny Bloch, September 8, 1992.  
47 <sup>63</sup> Maxine Wolchansky, *Let's Bake with Beulah Ledner, A Legendary New Orleans Lady* (Duluth, GA, 1987).  
48 <sup>64</sup> Interviews given by descendants Ruth Dreyfous, 1992, 1994, Catherine C. Kahn, 1997, Flo Geismar-Margolis, 1992, 1994, 1996, conduct-  
49 ed by Anny Bloch.  
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## 53 Corrections

54  
55 p.80, l.13 Alsace Lorraine instead of German , more accurate.  
56 p. 83,l.28 Généraux (accents)  
57 p. 84, l. 1 préfet (accent)  
58 - l. 20 Léon  
59 p. 86, l.36 Bas-Rhin

- 1 p.87, l.5 département
- 2 p. 88 . 7 suppress sentence with unclusive
- 3 p.90 l.3 Lévy
- 4 - 1.3 Ingwiller
- 5 p.91, l.3 Grüssenheim
- 6 p. 91, l.8, Léon , Séraphine
- 7 p. 100, l. 33 chère grand-mère
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