

Southern New Jersey
SYNAGOGUES

A SOCIAL HISTORY

HIGHLIGHTED
BY
STORIES
OF JEWISH LIFE
FROM THE
1880'S - 1980'S

Written By
ALLEN MEYERS

HISTORIAN
of the
Jewish Community
Greater Delaware Valley
Philadelphia, PA.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Woodbine, New Jersey was developed as an agricultural Colony for newly arriving Russian Jewish immigrants in the early 1890's. A tract of 5300 acres was purchased by the American trustees of the Baron De Hirsch Fund. The cost of the land was \$ 37,500. John B. Moore, a glass manufacturer in Clayton, Gloucester County sold the land to the trustees in 1891.

This idea of another attempt at getting the Russian Jews onto the land and attached to the soil had been tried in the 1880's with limited success in America. Often times, the experiment ended in complete failure.

It was now the 1890's and the Baron De Hirsch Fund was in full operation. Dr. Julius Goldman, a trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund supported an agricultural approach for resettlement of the Russian Jews in America.

Woodbine up until 1891, had been a clearing along the West Jersey Railroad with a wide Avenue that led to a nearby town. John B. Moore had bought the land in the late 1880's and had the area surveyed into a town by 1887. The name of the community was given by Mrs. William S. Townsend of the nearby town of Dennisville. She named the town for the abundant growth of the Woodbine flower known as honey suckle

The tract of land was sold in 1891 for a Jewish settlement. New site plans were drawn up with streets named after the benefactors of the Fund. Poets and past presidents of the United States of America were given high respect by naming streets in their honor.

Natural wooded areas and parks were set aside. Streets were made big and wide. One acre lots was the core of the design of this town. The center of town was located near the Railroad Station. Sixty farms with some thirty acres of ground each would surround the town.

Work was started in preparation before the arrival of the immigrants in 1892. This clearing of the land was a familiar ritual as performed in the Alliance and Carmel Colonies some ten years earlier. By late 1892, ten houses were completed and forty more were almost ready for the 50 Jewish families that had arrived in Woodbine. By February 1893, six more families arrived in Woodbine

The Colonists were allotted thirty acres and given live stock, farms tools and Mazel or good luck to begin their pioneering days. Unlike in Alliance and Carmel, these newly arriving immigrants were expected to put down \$120 or 10% of the \$ 1200 for each farm. The Fund would arrange a mortgage for the balance. These Jews came with money but were soon penniless!

This Colony would be different in many ways as compared to the other Jewish settlements in Southern New Jersey. The Colony would not adopt a new name of its own or change its current name as did the Carmelites.

Farming and the soil were one and the same for the initial lifestyle of these people. But very shortly, the backers of this project realized that this idealism would not work 12 months per year in the woods.

Industry would have to be introduced into the community to help supplement the Jewish farmers in the off season. This was viewed with great concern by the Trustees of the Fund, if indeed the Fund hoped to receive its mortgage payments!

The idea of industry in conjunction with agriculture was not a new idea in the Jewish settlements of Southern New Jersey. Some settlements were completely organized in this manner. Halberton, Zionsville, Mizpah and Lebanon were examples of Jewish industrial settlements in Southern New Jersey in the early 1890's

But those settlements did not receive the 100% backing and guarantee for its survival as in the case of Woodbine. The Fund helped to create opportunity for industry in the Woodbine community by creating the Woodbine Land and Industrial Development Company. In turn, the Meyer Jonnason Clothing factory was opened in Woodbine in late 1892. One hundred and fifty people were employed here.

Newly arriving Jews from Europe were not factory workers. Now their ability to learn a new trade in farming was aligned with holding a needle and thread in their hands in the off season. This was done in the immigrant's home and later they were confined under one roof where all who held a needle and thread would work together at the same time.

Support for the families from the fund immediately stopped shortly after the clothing factory was opened. Suddenly their was kaos in the Colony. Reports of the legal agreement for the Colonists were soon to be released.

Up until this time, the Jewish Colonist were doing fine. True, they did not arrive in time in 1892 to plant crops. But employment in the clothing factory would carry them over to the Spring of 1893.

New arrivals in Woodbine at this time included David G. Ludins. At the time of the presentation of the contracts there was an uproar in town. The copies of the agreements were printed in Yiddish for all to read. The contract now read that the farmers agreed to pay interest on the loans made to them. But no farms existed By February 1893! The Colonists thought that the Fund befriended them. This was not in keeping with Jewish Ethics. Jewish people did not treat other Jews in this fashion. The Jewish Colonist protested by refusing to plant crops in the Spring of 1893

The matter was brought before a civil judge in court in Cape May. The farmers lost and were ordered to pay the interest as judged in Court in April 1893. The result of this court case in the Jewish community resulted in more favorable terms for the Colonists and their mortgages were reduced at a later date. The Colonists also found out that the Baron De Hirsch Fund was not a charitable organization. Woodbine would truly develop on all levels as a model for new Jewish Colonies.

No sooner than this crisis halted development in Woodbine, another event would lead to more slowing progress in Woodbine. A decline and depression was about to set in on America and this was felt in Woodbine, too. Economic growth stopped and the factory stood still. All new building stopped. When this crossroad was met in Alliance and Carmel a few more years had elapsed since their inception as a Colony. But all of these Colonies approached this situation in the same manner. This meant a return to Jewish values that were inherited from the old world. Internal growth was the order of the day.

Self help and religious groups were organized and they formally started their institutional work. This was real community building and this signified that the community would be permanent. The Colonial period of survival in Woodbine was now behind them.

There was a backlash against the Colonists by the factory owners during this time. In 1893, there was no place for public worship during the High Holidays. The manufacturer refused to permit the factory building to be used for such a purpose as they had done the preceding year.

Over coming the year of distress in Woodbine was not easy and not over yet in the Summer of 1893. To make up for lost income, the factory opened on Saturday and work in the woods continued on the Sabbath, too. But people had to eat in 1893! Even at the expense of not observing the Sabbath.

Hirsch Lieb Sabsovich was chosen the superintendent of the Woodbine Colony due to his background. Hirsch was an agricultural chemist and a believer in the resettlement of Jews to the soil. This new overseer of the Colony was special in many ways. His value and dedication would lead the Woodbine Colony into the 20th century. Hirsch was the head of the Am Olam movement that would resettle Russian Jews onto the land and to till the soil in America. His appointment would be good for the beginning growth of the Woodbine Colony. Hirsch's ideals were put forth into practice on a daily basis.

Other Colonies had their leaders but Hirsch Lieb Sabsovich had vision. He was not a benefactor of the community but he lived to see his idea implemented in the community unlike Michael Heilprin in Carmel. That Benefactor died before his dream of a prosperous settlement could take hold.

As 1892 and 1893 did not promise to be a profitable year for Woodbine, late 1893 signified the beginning of a new Jewish year. At the outset of the Jewish year 5654, meant that the Jews in Woodbine could make ends meet. But more importantly these Jews could see hope in their destiny. It was a new year beginning!

Some Jewish Colonies ceased operation that left Jewish Colonists as Jewish settlers independently on their own. Zionsville and Halberton were examples of this growth and decline in this era. But Woodbine was fortunate to have the Railroad and the Baron De Hirsch Fund both operating in their community on their behalf.

Some individuals left Woodbine just the same during this time period. David G. Ludins was one such person. His farming experience proved to be a failure. As an individual, he tried to peddle his fruits and vegetables but with no luck. He tried to sell his produce as far away as Millville and traveled there only to be rejected. David returns to Woodbine only to find out that the factory workers can not afford to buy his produce either. So in desperation David left his wagon in front of the factory for all to enjoy "free of charge". David Ludins leaves Woodbine.

This was a time in Woodbine when times would change. The community organized Woodbine's first self help group in October of 1893. A Benevolent association was set up first. Agudas Achim Anshei Woodbine was incorporated December 15, 1893. This was done with the help of H.L. Sabsovich. Herman Rosenfeld was chosen President and H.L. Sabsovich was elected its Treasurer with Jacob Feldman as Secretary.

A Chevra Kaddish or Jewish burial society was organized. Rev. Sabato Morais helped to organize this group as a Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund. Rev. Morais was not the Rabbi at Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia at this time but he was compiling his material for his extensive book entitled "The Jews of Philadelphia". Later in 1894, his work would be published.

As the Chevra Kaddish was organized in Woodbine, a Jewish burial ground was consecrated outside of town on December 26, 1893. The final resting place for the early pioneers was a testament of the group to survive the harsh conditions and make a home in the woods for Jews.

The monetary support for the Colonist as provided by the Baron De Hirsch Fund stopped in 1893 and the frightening prospect of economic collapse in America in 1893 came to Woodbine. These two events left the East European Jews in a strange land with newly acquired work habits. Faced with this bleak picture, the newly arrived immigrants began to get things done each day by depending on each other. The Benevolent Association forming at this crucial hour of need was a blessing in Woodbine. This was temporarily in effect.

Farm products and a market for them meant not only dignity for the Jewish farmer but his very physical survival. David G. Ludins leaving Woodbine brought attention to this vital issue. A market for the farmer's produce was the key in the success of the Colony.

To help achieve this goal, a school was initiated at the secondary level to resolve this problem. Modern farming teachings were needed in order to yield good crops. Improvisation and ingenuity were the key elements for the Colonist's ability to make farming work for them. There was a need to work smarter on the part of the Jew, even without the money for fertilizer.!

By October 1894, the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School opened its doors with fifteen students. The resolve of the community to achieve success through good management of the soil was a solution to be worked on in the classroom. This was an inspiration to the Jewish Colonist in Woodbine during 1894 and 1895. Local market development and modern techniques were taught here. Industry and agriculture were working side by side in Woodbine. A new milk run was started to Ocean City in the spirit of this pioneering effort to open up new markets.

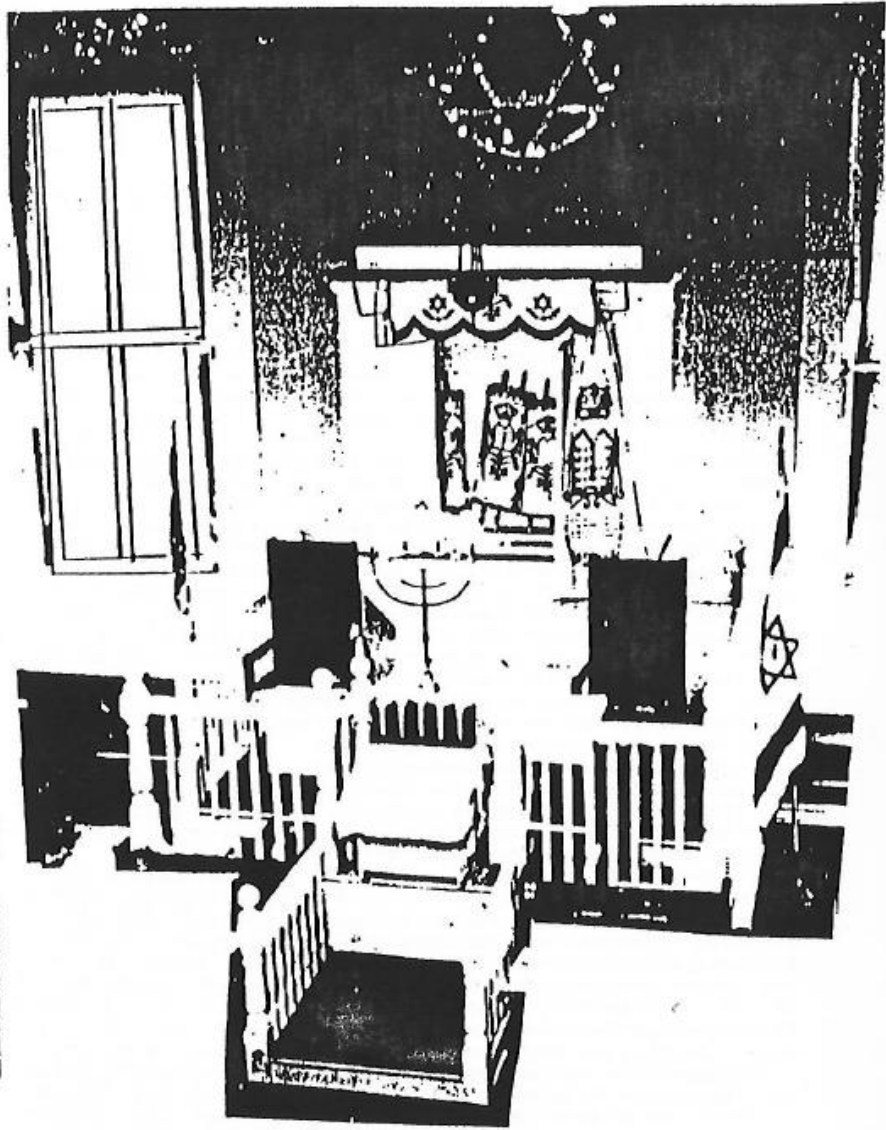
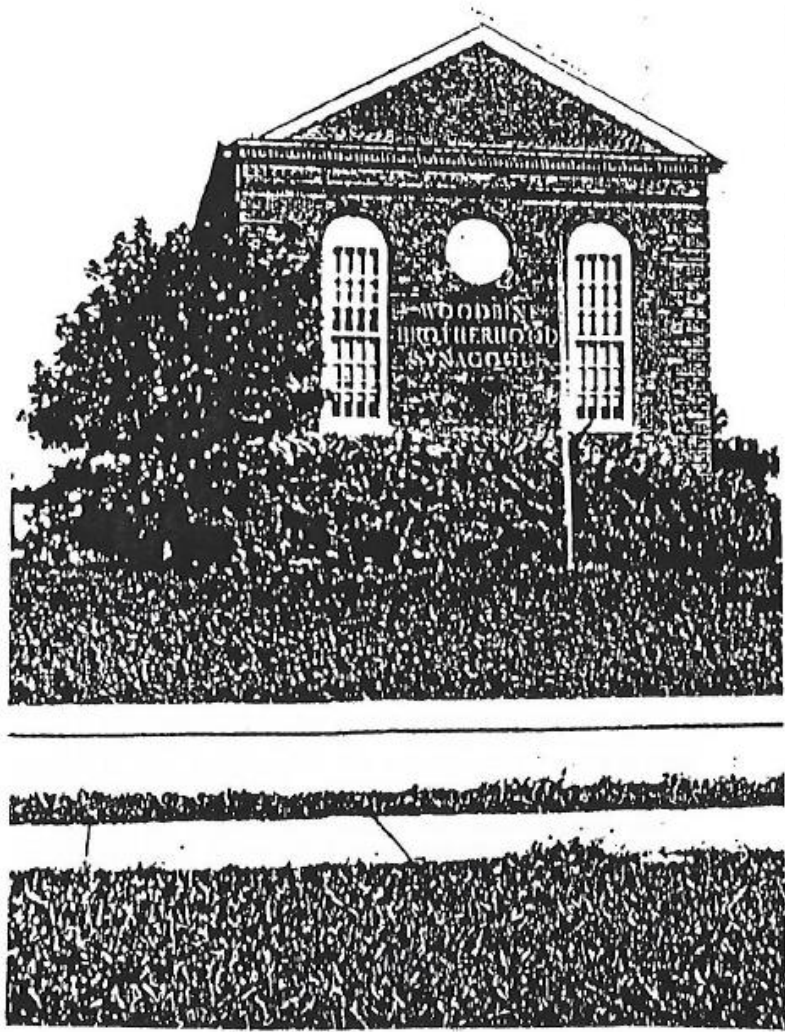
New milestones were passed by the community to make Woodbine look more permanent than ever before! This included the development of the social fabric into active participation in daily life in the community.

Hirsch Sabasovich initiated the idea of a public bath house in the community during 1894. This was done so as not to offend the Gentile neighbors in Dennisville. Jews were not dirty people! The new farm school was an inspiration in itself. Fifteen students were enrolled in the first of its kind agricultural secondary school in the nation. This would assist the immigrant and their families for the initial period of adjustment in a new land. This was really a retraining school for Jewish hands in a foreign land.

The course was open to fourteen year olds in good health. Three years later, the student would graduate after learning secular studies in 12 areas and religion! Included in this survey of courses were areas of modern farming methods. This included course in soils and crops, manure and fertilizers, land measuring, zoology, entomology, collecting of plantings, feeds, domestic animals and their care, horticulture, flora culture, landscaping and gardening, meteorology, relation of forestry to agriculture, dairying and farm implements plus machinery.

Girls had their own course and were a vital part of the school. Separate dormitories were built for the girls. A department of religions was developed and both boys plus girls attended. Achilleus Joff was the instructor of religion here. Religious services were held daily as were Shabbas services. Shabbas was observed by the school where worship, rest and religious instruction took place.

During the 1890's, the Chatuaqua Society started a chapter on the grounds of the school for the advance of Judaism in the modern world. This coincided with the creation of the second agricultural school in the nation. The two schools were only separated by 100 miles. The second farm school was located outside of Philadelphia. The National Jewish Farm School was founded by Rabbi Joseph Krauskopt of Philadelphia's Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in 1896. One hundred students attended sabbath school at the Woodbine Farm School which was sponsored by the Chatuaqua Society. Rabbi Henry Berkowitz of Rodeph Sholom Congregation created this newly founded society. Rabbi Berkowitz brought this new idea of instruction to Woodbine which was separated from the traditional orthodox community by over 56 miles.



By the year 1896, Woodbine was making progress in many parts of the community. Social progress within the community was forthcoming. The community was growing and with it a need for more services. Newly arriving immigrants to Woodbine were part of this growth. A second Benevolent Association was formed in February 1896. Religious services were offered as part of this group's activities. Hadath Sholem was organized quickly.

Jews were free to practice their religion without fear of pogroms. Another form of persecution here in America was tried but was opposed. Sabbath observance was observed in Woodbine on Saturday and not Sunday as the state law of New Jersey dictated. Jews in the Colonies of Rosenhayn and Carmel were fined for opening their stores up on Sunday.

The Jews challenged this idea of separation of Church and State. The authorities relented after it was brought to their attention that nearby Shiloh outside of Bridgeton, a Seventh Day Adventist Colony would observe their sabbath on Saturday. The Shiloh Colony was a short distance away from the Rosenhayn Colony. Woodbine would later benefit from this fact as their stores would be open late on Saturday nights and Sundays to serve the surrounding communities nearby.

By 1896, the Woodbine community was solidly situated and firmly entrenched in its economic activities. The people of the land were here to stay! Just as the Alliance Colony built its synagogue five years after its initial development so too Woodbine would follow suit. The synagogue was a symbol of hope to all the Jews in the community. The congregants themselves helped to construct the physical building of the synagogue. The men even donated monies from a community work project. This added \$ 150 to the treasury of the shul. The synagogue would be built with bricks symbolizing the permanent nature of the community. The bricks were made in the community as the new brick yard was opened in 1896.

Thus the Jewish community relied on itself to join together and dedicate a handsome building for the worship of the Almighty G-d according to Jewish rituals and customs. A wood frame building of this size could not be built! The idea to create a house of worship in the middle of the wilderness was put into motion with the guidance of Rabbi Sabato Morais and Rabbi B.L. Levinthal of Philadelphia. The synagogue measured 40 feet by 75 feet and stood two and one half stories tall. This was the tallest building around for miles in the woods near Woodbine.

The Colonist were proud of the opportunity to build a handsome place of worship. The Colonists completed the new synagogue after the harvest of 1896. Thus the consecration service of the new shul was held near the American Thanksgiving Day. This was done purposely to let G-d know that they were thankful of their lot in a new land.

Six Torahs were marched around the synagogue and into the shul on November 29, 1896. Honorable dignitaries of the Jewish communities of Philadelphia, New York City and Baltimore were present at this historical time making moment. Trustees of the Baron De Hirsch Fund were present. Trustee Honorable A.S. Solomon of New York City kindled the Ner Tamid or the eternal light in the shul. Philadelphia Rabbis gave leading addresses including one by Rabbi Dr. Marcus Jastrow of Congregation Adath Jeshurun. The dedication sermon was delivered by Rabbi Sabato Morais, Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Jacob Rosenbaum would lead his congregation in prayer on every Shabbas and into the 20th century in Woodbine. His brother, Abraham Rosenbaum was the acting Baal Tiflah or reader of the Torah on a regular basis. Cantor Daniel Zussman had a beautiful voice and would add to the beauty of the service on Shabbas and Yontav as being the Cantor in Woodbine.

By the beginning of 1896 or late 1896, two separate Jewish organizations tended to the religious and social needs of the Jews in Woodbine. Slowly the Agudas Achim Anshei Woodbine group would allow religion to become a major part of its activities. Abraham Goodman was its President, Abraham Pearlman was the Secretary and Max Potasinik was the Treasurer. All three were signers of the charter in the Cape May County Court House when this organization filed for its papers. Max Potasinik signed his name in Hebrew in the deed book.

The new shul would serve many purpose immediately in Woodbine. The vestry or large room downstairs was used as a place for secular education. Religious instruction was also given in the afternoon hours. A new concept of kindergarten was introduced in the community. This was housed in the downstairs part of the synagogue. The morning sessions of the kindergarten was conducted by Miss Finklestein of Philadelphia. This was the first kindergarten in Cape May County to be established.

By 1897, 240 families lived in Woodbine and that brought the population to nearly 1000 Jews! The approach of the turn of the century would bring an important change in the community and led the Woodbine community to do what no other Jewish Colony had ever done before in the swamps and woods of Southern New Jersey.

Arthur Reichow, Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund from New York promoted the idea of more industry to meet the needs of the expanding Jewish community in Woodbine. The Colony was 100 % Jewish up until this time and little contact outside of the community meant that a shetle mentality was recreating itself here in America!

The idea of more industry in Woodbine was made a reality as the population increased. But with more industry coming to Woodbine all at one time meant that non-Jews were invited to fill factory spots for the first time in Woodbine. This action that was fostered by the Baron De Hirsch Fund would have lasting effects upon the Jewish community. Hard times were ahead for the newly arriving Jewish immigrants to Woodbine. No jobs in the factories due to the introduction of outside non-Jewish help created a crisis in the community.

Factory life superseded farm life. More people were employed in the factories in the late 1890's than those people who worked on the family owned farms. Production in the factory had to be maintained with outside help. Similar people of East European backgrounds were brought into Woodbine with the Baron De Hirsch Fund blessing. This idea would help to keep the factories fully productive and at the same time help to break up the Shettle mentality that was reforming here in America. The Fund helped the non-Jewish population not only with jobs but with their social integration into the community by financing a local Baptist Church.

By the winter of 1898, the crisis as pertaining to jobs for Jews seeking to live in an all Jewish environment did not cease! The trains brought newly arriving Roumanian, Russian and Galcanizer Jews to Woodbine weekly. By December 2, 1898, the situation was handled by the creation of the Woodbine Women's Aid Society. The result of more Jews coming to town in search of factory jobs created a need for this society to exist. The religious community was over burdened with this problem which threatened to bankrupt the shul's treasury.

As Jewish teachings worked before, their teaching would work again! An Or Chaim or way farer's organization was created by the ladies in Woodbine with help of the community. The German influence on community development helped to create this group. Philadelphia organizations existed to help ease the pain and suffering of the newly arriving immigrants in that city, too. But here in Woodbine, it was the desire of the immigrant himself to help serve the needs of their Jewish brethren who passed through Woodbine in search of a better or new way of life in a free land that separated them from the ambitions of the Philadelphia Societies.

Ida Lipman as President, Mrs. Jacob Feldman as Treasurer and Mrs. M. Subber as Secretary helped to direct the society initially. Its purpose was mutual aid to the newly arriving immigrants who came to Woodbine and had no place to stay. Later, the society would expand and help to make the immigrant self-sufficient by granting him loans that were interest free. By 1901, the Society had an annual income of \$ 1200 to operate for this purpose.

In 1899, Arthur Reichow, Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund and agent for the Woodbine Land and Improvement Company left Woodbine for Europe to regain his health. Meanwhile, Jewish life in Woodbine continued. A Grand Ball was held to help raise funds for the Women's Aid Society. This was held at the Woodbine Hall. This Purium Ball was a usual fund raiser for the Reform and liberal congregations in Philadelphia. Keneseth Israel and Beth Israel would boast of the same fund raiser at the same time of year for their congregations.

During Passover, the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School provided strictly orthodox festivities for the students that remained on campus. A large Seder was held in the Baron De Hirsch Hall and the story of Exodus was retold in Hebrew and Yiddish with addresses made by the heads of the school. Members of the Agudas Achim Congregation conducted their own seders in their homes with plenty of farm produce from the community.

The turn of the century came swiftly to Woodbine. By 1901, Woodbine could boast of a ten year period of growth since its inception in 1891. Now 1400 people lived in the area that had been covered by thick woods. Four factories were in operation, five stores were open and three public schools existed. Cape May County's first kindergarten was growing with the community and was in operation for five years. Three Jewish fraternal societies were chartered and an evening school for instruction in the English language was open. A public and a religious bathhouse was constructed in the 1890's. A large synagogue was built by the community for public worship. A religious school or Cheder was organized and met in the shul which served 40 children. A hall for public meetings was built and a volunteer fire department was formed for the community's safety. The Woodbine Improvement Association was organized in 1900 to insure good sanitation and to help curb the spread of Consumption. A farm was converted into a sanitorium for this purpose. This was a rest house for people who could be cured if the dreaded disease that stricken many people. The concept of such a rest house was not new since the Philadelphia community supported such a project by the German Jews in that city. The Philadelphia plan was to secure a place in the countryside for people who could be rehabilitated. This would lead to the Jewish Consumptive Institute being made into a sanitarium outside of Philadelphia near Norristown by the end of the first decade of the 20th century.

Progress had been made in community development in Woodbine. The inhabitants of the town had progressed, too. The village was growing and expanding every day. These Jews did not choose to rename their town as did the inhabitants of the Carmel Colony. The people of Woodbine took a bold step in 1902 by calling a meeting to discuss the future of their community. Woodbine was producing tax dollars for Cape May County that never came back to Woodbine itself for its needs.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

The Community decided to secede from Cape May County's Dennis Township and create their own Boro. This meant that a charter was needed to incorporate itself as an independent municipality. For the first time in over 2000 years, Jews were governing themselves! The board of directors for the Woodbine Boro were all Jews. This was a profound difference between all and any of the Jewish Colonies that moved into the 20th century. Woodbine would stand out as being a leader and thus a model in civic government. In 1903, the Woodbine Boro was incorporated. A Jewish mayor was elected in H.L. Sabsovich. More Jewish people arrived in Woodbine from Russia as mob violence got worse and pogroms were rampant in the early 1900's in Kiev and Odessa.

By 1904, change was taking place in Woodbine again. A Hebrew school rather than a Cheder was started in association with the Woodbine Synagogue. Funding came from the Baron De Hirsch Fund as it was named for one of the New York Trustees. The Myer S. Issac Hebrew School was a reality. The Hebrew School would be incorporated on May 23, 1905. Ephraim Tepper was chosen president, B. A. Palitz the new superintendent of the Colony and later became the Mayor of Woodbine was selected Treasurer and the Secretary was S. Echer. Three class, three teachers and 65 students made up the religious school. Daily instruction in Judaism was given to these youngsters. This was the similar program which was started in Philadelphia under the watchful eye of Rabbi B.L. Levinthal known as the Central Talmud Torah.

Similar to Norma, Woodbine organized a Farmers Association in 1905. L. Sapsin was elected president of the Farmer's Association. Children were a key element in the success of the Colony. Their energies had to be harnessed for productive lives. As in Norma, A Young Boys Club was founded in 1904 with 30 members and a Girls Club had been organized in 1901 with 95 members.

A new influx of Jews to Woodbine meant self help groups had to be formed by the community as a whole. They were! The Women's Aid Society was joined by the Relief Association for Russian Sufferers. This organization was headed by the superintendent of the Colony, B.A. Palitz.

The Woodbine synagogue was built in the same year as the great benefactor in Baron Maurice De Hirsch died. The following year in 1897, political action on the part of Jews got worldwide attention with the convening of the first Zionist Convention. Woodbine had been built with the help of the Am Olam people in H.L. Sabsovich. But Zionism was brought to Woodbine by people and newspapers arriving weekly on the trains. New ideas in Jewish life would be tried. This meant teaching of Zionism in Woodbine and fund raising for this cause.

The Agricultural School was a forum for new ideas on this subject. This was not limited to purely agricultural or even social discussion. With the recent development in a worldwide Zionist Organization, Woodbine would be privy to hear this message as it incorporated an independent Boro that was governed by all Jews.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

The Zionist message was timely for Woodbine's direction since this would unite all Jewish brethren as this message was being aired to the world. Peace and unity through civic activity on behalf of the Jew in his host country was discussed. In Woodbine, it was this very ideal that was being put into practice. Being a Jew now meant more than mere persecution!

Jews united in political organization to further better the image and position of the Jew worldwide. Praise and pride were key ingredients of this message. Rev. H. Kleiner and a business man traveled the Greater Delaware Valley in search of developing a Zionist organization at the grass roots level. Contact was made in Woodbine with new students at the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School. Hyman Lebeson was a newly arrived immigrant in 1907. His goal was to learn Agriculture and then leave for Palestine.

In 1907 Hyman invited Rev. H. Kleiner to Woodbine to give a talk on Zionism. As a result, a Zionist Society was formed at the school. Ideas were exchanged and Zionism was discussed daily. Lectures spread the news of the power of unity for Jewish idealism in a modern world.

Not only were the students organized but a children's Zionist club was formed by Lena Subber in Woodbine in 1907.

By the early 1900's, Woodbine had grown 2 times the size of the Alliance Colony. This was the right time to create another congregation. All the societies united and persuaded their members to realign themselves. Woodbine was expanding and could not house under one roof all the Jewish traditions found in the old country according to one's Shetle. Thus in 1904, Woodbine's Tiferes Israel was organized.

Rabbi Louis Haas was brought to Woodbine to help instruct the children in the newly founded Myer S. Issac Hebrew School. Rabbi Haas was of German origin. The congregation and the group of students plus the facility of the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School could not reach out to the newly arriving immigrants from Roumania. Different factories still remained open on Saturday's. This also led to the creation of the second generation. The Balabitim or leaders of the Agudas Achim or Woodbine's Brotherhood were very observant and the ritual was strictly orthodox. But the congregational members were not always as observant.

Tiferes Israel was organized by Michael Heiner. The Secretary was L. Tepper. Where as the Agudas Achim had 250 members, Tiferes Israel had 100 members in its beginning.

Daily services were conducted by both congregations and in Hebrew. A Baptist church was constructed with the monies from the Baron De Hirsch Fund in the last part of the 19th century. As Woodbine incorporated as a municipality that became governed by Jews meant that the Gentiles abandoned their house of worship in the community. Tiferes Israel bought this building and converted it into a synagogue.

David Feldman's father, Barnet was a regular member who attended services at Tiferes Israel. In years to come, the congregation would be known as the little shul.

The little shul had its bima in the center of the synagogue. The Mechitzah separated men up front from women in the rear of the shul. Voice pledges were made and honored here without a fuss. Aliyahs were sold to help support the shul. But if you could not afford a donation you were still a member in good standing at this shul! The Baal Korei or Reader of the Torah was found in David Feldman's uncle, Issac Feldman.

The little shul was painted yellow and sat across the street from one of the public schools. This was only a few short blocks from the big synagogue. Woodbine would eventually have four congregations operating at the same time and only a short distance from each other. This alignment of places of public worship would be Woodbine's Synagogue Row. Only smaller in size and scope compared to Philadelphia's Broad Street Synagogue Row of the same period in the 1910's.

Plurality and freedom to conduct synagogue business was central to this idea of more than one synagogue here in Woodbine. As in Philadelphia, if you didn't like an aspect of your congregation, you could go synagogue hopping to the next one nearby. This was not only American but Jewish life at its very best! Time would help to deteriorate the quality of Jewish life in its synagogue in Woodbine.

In the 1920's and 1930's, this aspect of the community was good in that it brought people of different religious views in contact with the other Jews in a Religious setting. Daily minyan and services were held at the big synagogue in honor of a Yashreit or observance of the anniversary of the death of loved one. The members of the small shul mingled with the members of the big shul in this fashion. The shul just closed in the late 1950's. No merger took place. No members meant no more synagogue!

From the religious structure sprang traditions that spilled over into all phases of daily life in the community. This included the financial affairs of the community. The Baron De Hirsch Fund supplied monies to different corporations and factories in large amounts but not to individuals. Within Jewish tradition, the concept of a Gemilias Chesed or Free Loan Society was brought over from the old world and incorporated into daily use in Woodbine in 1901. This new organization, Woodbine's Gemilias Chesed or Free Loan Society would grow in time as Woodbine expanded. Its purpose was to help rescue people from immediate financial money matters. Jewish tradition would not allow the borrower to know who gave the money and no interest was collected during the period this money was used.

But individuals needed monies to move into the future. Building and loan associations were created for this purpose. As in Philadelphia, these were separate organizations were run by the Balabitim or the leaders of the the synagogues. This was true in Woodbine, too. Then came along the benevolent societies which numbered three in Woodbine by 1904. Benefits included sick and well ones. Payments for being sick and out of work plus funeral costs were paid as a benefit. Dues were collected and set at 10¢ per week.

The welfare of the members were extended by the organizations that needed to be chartered by the State of New Jersey. That is not to say that all societies that operated were chartered ones. These Benevolent Societies also provided monetary loans to its members. Shares were sold at meetings for collateral. In return, members could borrow usually twice and sometimes as much as four times what they had built up in reserve through their contributions. This was separate from the building and loan associations that were formed in Woodbine which were also ran by Jews.

In Bridgeton, the beginning building and loan associations that the Carmelites went to see for loans were not run by Jews in the 1890's. Building and loan associations helped to improve the living conditions of the communities they served by lending money for home building. On the other hand, the Jewish " corporation " which had elected officials was meant for short term loans of three or four months.

By the 1910's, money and the need for the funds were found in another source. The industries of Woodbine demanded more and new ways of creating money services. Mr. Abramson helped to start a bank in the 1920's as a culmination of efforts to help Woodbiners not to just survive in the woods but to live their dreams.

Up until this time, Woodbine was similar to the predominately Jewish neighborhood of Strawberry Mansion in Philadelphia. No banks ever existed in Strawberry Mansion. But its inhabitants used the internal Jewish institutions in the community of over 50,000 Jews to conduct money matters.

In Woodbine, new factory checks were being cashed by an insurance agent. Harold Abrams used his office for this purpose in the 1910's and 1920's. The Millville bank had a traveling branch in Woodbine. A man from the Millville bank would come down to Woodbine weekly on the train with a suitcase full of money. This is how money matters were conducted in Woodbine before the advent of the establishment of the Woodbine Bank in 1926. Corporations continued to operate and was the only source of daily mortgage activity in Woodbine during the Depression years.

Some Jews in Woodbine who lacked Religious upbringing and suffered persecution in Russia pondered the idea of how important it is to pray to G-d on a daily basis. Did it accomplish any less disdain for the Jews themselves in their homeland? Now Jews were free to choose here in America and in Woodbine New Jersey their degree of Judaism. Why were there daily services in Woodbine if freedom to be a Jew meant only to be Jewish and not a participating Jew in a total Jewish community. In Russia, one did not have a choice to attend religious services after the 1917 Revolution. Prior to 1917 it was a different story. Everyone went to services daily. In those days there was still no choice but to be a Jew!

Religious freedom in America on the spiritual level meant only praying when you were confronted with Rosh Ha Shannah and Yom Kippur. True, the ultra religious Jews did not come to America initially during this period of time but the average Jew had a good working knowledge of daily prayers even if he was too poor to be sent to a Yeshiva.

Some Jews who came to Woodbine were outright Socialists and others were Free Thinkers! All the Jews fitted into Woodbine inspite of this development. Woodbine was not a religious theological community. It was where all who called themselves Jews came to work and live. Some Jews indeed shed their beards and dark long coats once in Woodbine. But this was done in return for a different daily philosophy. Praying to G-d as a Jew was part of this progressive approach to their daily life. There was no chief Rabbi to scorn them here in Woodbine if they did not keep the Sabbath, Kashruth and pray to G-d three times per day. These same Jews brought with them an appetite for protest of worker's rights in the factories of Woodbine. These Jews were set apart from the already settled Jews in the community immediately following World War One. In addition there was a difference of those Jews from the settled Jews who knew why there were daily Jewish services even in a " Free " society!

Education of the children in the rich tradition of the Jew from Eastern Europe would continue in Woodbine in a variety of ways. Separate from the communal Talmud Torah was the religious instruction passed onto the children in Woodbine through the private teachers and tutors of Melameds. These pious men were private instructors of Judica.

Mr. Bear was a shochet who started his own minyan and established the fourth congregation in Woodbine in the 1910's. Mr. Joffe held this position in the community as well as being the Shamus of the big synagogue. Ten to fifteen children were taught their Jewish heritage in this fashion. This alternative to the communal Talmud Torah was in effect for people who couldn't afford the Talmud Torah tuition but still wanted a Jewish education for their children. Some parents and families were not religiously oriented and therefore could not philosophically subscribe to having their children in the intensive daily Talmud Torah in America.

Even though a kosher home was a normal way of life for the people in Woodbine, this did not ensure a religious home! The Immerman's would switch to electricity in the 1920's and their lights went out at mid night Friday. The light did not come back on until after sun down Saturday night. But for some people who did not want to be hippocratical and did not keep the Sabbath were Jews in their own way! These Jews did not want to deny their children a Jewish education if only on a lessor scale and the Melamed provided this opportunity.

The Melameds were experts in this oral tradition. Lessons were taught in Yiddish. The sessions were conducted as in the Immerman's case in their own homes in Woodbine into the 1910's. Jack Immerman who was born in 1906 and his brother were tutored in this fashion. Their father, Samuel died at an early age as the family came to Woodbine in the 1910's. The " Grip " was a deadly killer of many immigrants in the Jewish Colonies throughout Southern New Jersey during this time. This condition was more deadly than Consumption. Samuel's wife and Zayde Jacob raised the children and had them prepared for their Bar Mitzvahs.

New arriving English Jews with their families in the 1910's chose this form of Jewish education for their children, too

Education in Woodbine was placed at the top of each family's priority list. Fifty five students in the 1910's were graduated on the average from the new Woodbine High School. In Woodbine 95 to 98 percent of the graduates in the High School went onto College. These children could not compete with the other children in Cape May County since they were far ahead of them.

This development would lead many children away from home for good. But come Yontav, the children as adults would return home. The children would spend time with their parents and attend services at one of the four synagogues that existed in Woodbine in the 1910's. The grown children would take their place on the benches next to their parents as their parents had done one generation ago in the old country.

The 1910's would bring a great deal of change to Woodbine. The big synagogue had become of age by this time and was known as the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue. Thirty years had elapsed since the congregation went into debt and secured a mortgage on its future to finance a new place of public worship.

Finally in 1915, the debt owed to the Baron De Hirsch Fund was soon to be retired! This was a joyous time in this congregation. The pioneering generation was now in its old age and a new generation was about to take over the running of the big synagogue.

Jacob Feldman initiated a plan for renovating the big synagogue. I.E. Isenberg was hired as an architect to design and rearrange the seating in the synagogue. Part of the plans called for enlarged seating area. The Main Floor would be divided into three sections. On the blueprints each section was identified by a Hebrew letter.

On the far right side of the shul, Aleph section encompassed 77 seats as did Gimel section on the far left side. In the middle section was Beth and there were 36 seats laid out. The bima still remained in the center of the shul according to the old world traditions. The section between the readers table and the Aron Kodesh or Holy Ark where the Torahs were stored was reserved for the Balabitim or the officers of the synagogue.

Numbers in Jewish tradition and folklore play a major role. The fact that 36 seats were arranged in the center of the synagogue signified that the righteous sat there which included the children and the officers.

A full three sided balcony with the Mechitiza or banister rising the proper distance from the floor made this a Kosher a one! The women's seating was also arranged into three sections and by Hebrew letters. The seats in the synagogue were divided according to sex as per the usual tradition in Europe. But the idea of dividing the synagogue evenly was strange. This was change in thinking for Jewish life in America, where mostly the men would attend shul even on Yontav. The women stayed home to watch the children.

But this was changing. Young children were kept at home and the baby sitters were hired so both men and women could attend prayer services at the synagogue at the same time in Woodbine in the 1910's.

As the protest over worker rights erupted into strikes at the factories in Woodbine in the 1910's, change was seen everywhere. This was the era leading up to America's involvement in World War One.

Economic recession in 1913 was carried into Woodbine. Still change was ever present. The next generation of immigrant children were beginning to take their place. These youngsters were growing up and setting out on their own. They engaged in commerce and retailing. These people left for a trouble-free less Jewish environment in Wildwood, Salem and Pennsgrove. The Jewish community in Wildwood was attached to the Woodbine community through family ties. The Wildwood Jews made use of the Woodbine Jewish Cemetery as a result of this connection. The idea of freedom of enterprise coupled with Religious freedom made many small Southern New Jersey towns attractive to new Jewish shopkeepers. Wildwood, Salem and Pennsgrove all developed their minyans due to the beginning of many small enterprises in those communities in the 1910's and 1920's.

Jack Rifkin's dad was born in Russia and raised by an uncle in Bessarbia. Jack's other uncle had a grocery store in Brokklyn and helped to sponsor passage for the family. In 1900, Harry Rifkin would come and stop in Woodbine during the time before he was married. Jack's father was a farmer in Russia. His visit was uneventful except for the fact that he came to Woodbine. Harry Rifkin's trip was made in the Spring time. He asked the local people how it was in Woodbine in the Summer time. Their reply was, Woodbine is a lovely place but you can't push a wheelbarrel around very far!" Harry asked why not? The mosquitoes are so populous you had to have two hands free to protect yourself

Harry did not settle in Woodbine at this time. He opened a business in Brooklyn. His ice cream parlor was successful. By 1912, Harry would settle in Huntington, Long Island on a farm. In 1916, infantile paralysis struck his community. Deaths of children in New York City alone would number 400, 600, even 800 on some days! A great number of children died in a short period of time.

Raw milk was considered was considered to be the carrier of this disease and virus. Harry was a dairy farmer. This epidemic would last all summer in 1916. Relatives tried to run away from the city to avoid this terrible edict. But raw milk was Harry's livelihood. Harry would go out early in the morning to sell his milk. The Sheffield and Borden milk plants were located in Jamaica, Long Island. This was some distance from his farm. But this was too far to travel by horse and wagon with raw milk as his payload.

In the end Harry was caught two times selling his milk in the city. The whole dairy herd was slowly sold off and Harry would quit Long Island. He wanted to be a poultry farmer.

Harry would resettle his family outside of Trenton in New Eggpt. Being a Jew and farmer was a difficult life to live especially in a non-Jewish place. His children were attacked and physically abused by the non-Jewish element in the community. Jack being a child at the time could not do anything about the situation he found himself and his little sister in but to fight back! The children would walk seven miles one way to school. Jack and his sister would start out at 5 A.M. in the morning with a lantern in his hand. The Goyim would throw stones at him because he was a Jew!

His parents realized that they had to move for their children's sake after little Jack was burned upon his chest by these hoodlums with lighted cigarettes!

Woodbine would provide hope! New York City was now under seize from the Great Flu epidemic during 1918. Running from the city to escape death was common amongst many people including the Jews at this time.

Woodbine would be safe. Ninety-five percent Jewish people lived in this community and there was room to farm. Harry rented a house in town and initially worked in a clothing factory. The Flu outbreak was severe throughout the country and it came to Woodbine, too. Several funeral wagons per day would pass his new home in Woodbine. Death was all around him! Harry would settle on a farm outside of town.

Harry's home was Kosher as young Jack grew up. In Woodbine, there were five Kosher butchers in the late 1910's. They included two Siegals, Goldberg, Cutler and Potasnik.

Jewish life in Woodbine meant belonging to one's own shul. These people were not especially religious but the shul was a place of religious expression. Harry's father believed in the Republicans and Democrats. This idea helped to foster two synagogue in Woodbine in the early days. A third one existed on the grounds of the " Colony " or the Baron De Hirsch School. By the 1910's, more newly arriving Jews in Woodbine had their idea of what a shul should stand for and actually be!

This fourth shul was three blocks down the street from the Yellow Shul. The Yellow Shul was so named because its frame building was painted yellow. This was actually the Tiferes Israel congregation.

The fourth shul was a private synagogue and was located nearby. A grocery store served as the front of the building. This private shul was created as a reaction and breakaway from both synagogues in town. This private shul was known as Baer's shul. Mr. Baer was a melamed in Woodbine. Jack's father belonged to this shul as he arrived in Woodbine. At this time, over 3200 people lived in Woodbine. There were 6 or 7 clothing stores in town. Two movie houses, a cleaners an ice cream parlor, a hotel and many grocery stores not to mention the five Kosher Butcher shops.

For the High Holidays, life in Woodbine came to a halt as the Jewish New Year was ushered in this community. It was now the 1920's and Harry strictly observed the Sabbath. He refrained from working in the fields. The livestock were fed but no work was done.

On Shabbas, 25 to 30 members attended the Baer shul regularly. Come Saturday night, Woodbine was alive! You could buy anything from shoes to shoelaces in this town.

Growing up in Woodbine in the 1910's meant involvement in many different activities. Going to the Talmud Torah or being tutored in private lessons by the Melameds in Rev. Baer or Rev. Goldberg was the usual ritual. Being a Jew and boy scout was also part of growing up in Woodbine.

Jack Rifkin would be part of this activity. Teddy Roosevelt had founded the Boy Scouts in 1912. This movement in Woodbine had a previous beginning. Woodbine created its own self defense organization and touted a marching band in the late 1890's.

This group later gave way to the Winchester Junior Rifle Club. The members would practice in the woods with 22 caliber rifles. By the time Woodbine reached the 1910's, the pioneers thought that if this activity would continue, that the Government would ask the young men to join the United States Army. The pioneers left Russia due to this very same reason in many instances! This idea was against the beliefs held by many pioneers. Especially the men who fled the Czar's Army in desertion to come to America! In 1915, the Rifle Club changed its direction and decided to affiliate with the Boy Scouts of America. Thirty two boys made up this troop.

Becky Lexenburg was the Scout Master. The club meet in the Talmud Torah next to the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue. Fund raisers and other activities were held regularly to maintain the organization. The synagogue did not charter the group of Boy Scouts but there was not one Gentile boy who was a teenager in Woodbine at this time as recalled by Jack Rifkin

Jack is the oldest living Jewish Boy Scout in Woodbine today some seventy years later. This was not a Jewish Boy Scout Troop. Instead it was Jews who were Boy Scouts! They were all Jews and Woodbine was known as little Jerusalem!

In the 1930's, Jack Rifkin married the Rabbi's daughter in Woodbine. Ruth Taishoff was born in Russia. Her father, Rabbi Solomon Taishoff arrived in America in 1924. This was the era when America closed its doors to immigrants. Rabbi Taishoff being a person of the clergy was thus allowed to bring his family to America even as the nation closed its door to new immigrants.

Three years later in the late 1920's, meant that his whole family would arrive here. Meanwhile the immigration officers at Ellis Island suggested " little Jerusalem " to the Rabbi. Where upon, Rabbi Taishoff came to Woodbine and became the Rabbi at the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue in the late 1920's.

Woodbine was still in many regards like a shetle in Europe. On Friday afternoons, the town would close down and observe the Sabbath. Rabbi Taishoff died in 1932 before his daughter was to have married Jack Rifkin.

Mrs. Al Rossman (Shalk) was born in 1913 in Woodbine. Her father, Benjamin Shalk came to America from Russia in the early part of the century. The family arrived from Odessa. Benjamin arrived directly in Woodbine and immediately joined the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue. Benjamin would work for one of the clothing factories. Benjamin's wife's name in Yiddish was Verbas. She was in many ways opposite of her husband. Whereas Ben was religiously committed, Verbas was a free thinker and had a trained voice. She wrote Russian and would have been a teacher in Woodbine if time allowed this to occur.

Benjamin's involvement in public and religious affairs was initiated as soon as he came to Woodbine. Due to his speaking abilities, Ben was asked to assist the Zionist movement here in America.

Benjamin Shalk would not serve in the American military service. But he was a Cohan and he was always called to the Torah as part of his religious duties. Verbas could read Hebrew but was liberated in many ways. Especially when it came to religion.

The town wanted Benjamin to run for mayor and the factory wanted him to be the shop foreman. But Benjamin had ideals and principles. He refused to become a foreman because he would have to report on some men not doing their jobs. He could not bring himself to bear this responsibility.

In religious life it was the same story. The congregation wanted to draft him as a president of the Shul. This was not Benjamin Shalk! Instead, the Brith Achim Jewish Fraternity respected his authority to the utmost. One day, two men were discussing a portion in the Torah. Now you have to remember that Brith Achim was a Jewish Fraternal organization which included the most religious men in Woodbine as its members. The argument would be settled by Ben. Ben's knowledge of the Torah was well known. When he told the men to look on such and such a page, his complete respect was that much enhanced.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Being a Torah striving Jew in Woodbine in the late 1910's meant applying his knowledge to his daily life. Zionism brought him to America so he could escape the Czar's Army.

By the 1920's, his daughter was very active in the community. The public school took up most of her time as a girl of only ten or eleven years old. There were 20 to 25 students in her class. Some 90% of them were Jews. In the mid 1920's, a new change would come to Woodbine and cause a stir in the community.

Ritual in the Jewish community was conducted strictly by the men. The Chatuaqua Society challenged this conception on the actual grounds of the Jewish Agricultural School. But this lessening of ritual in return for Jewish history and culture was short lived for less than one decade. The congregations in Woodbine would not evolve into the modern period as in other towns and cities such as Wilmington or Vineland. No Conservative synagogue was going to supplant people who clung to their orthodoxy in Woodbine.

This hope and desire for modernization spilling over into the religious activities of Woodbine was not a closed case even after the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School closed in 1917.

The idea for a more liberalized approach to religion was tried in Norma. The introduction of English was at the root of this dilemma. For Norma, a Hebrew School that was taught in English did occur in the late 1920's. Not so in Woodbine! The recent influx of new immigrants to Woodbine in the late 1910's insured that Yiddish would remain the language of instruction within the Talmud Torah. But there was something missing as Woodbine went into the 1920's. Yes, the newly refurbished Synagogue with its enhanced seating arrangement was not completely satisfactory to many families in Woodbine. More immigrants arriving in Woodbine during this time who were religiously inclined did not like the attempts of this modernization. Thus a new congregation was readily formed to counter this movement. Still the problem remained. Some second generation Woodbiners remained in town and did not leave for other cities. Conservative Judaism would not be allowed to take hold and surely Reform behavior was not even thought about here in Woodbine. But the children who were now born in America to these Jewish immigrants were not comfortable in speaking only Yiddish if they were going to progress into the future.

The Jewish Community Center movement finally came to Woodbine. Though it was not welcomed, it persisted to integrate the newly born children of Jewish immigrants within the American Society. This was not going to set well within the entire Jewish Community. This was not Philadelphia's section known Marshall and Girard. A pluralistic Jewish community was not going to be created in Woodbine.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

The Jewish Community Center concept did take root in Woodbine with a great deal of money behind it. Benjamin Shalk was elected the president of the Center. Mrs. Harrow became the director of the Center. Parts of the school system was used by this movement as a place to initiate activity. Art classes, music and dancing were started. The reaction in the community was poor. All people regardless of their upbringing were invited to participate in those activities. Some Polish farmers and shop owners sent their children here. A sewing circle was started as an activity which intruded upon the livelihood of many Jewish families in Woodbine.

Even Jewish history was taught in English as an activity! Lectures were attended by both men and women here at the Center. Cooking classes were introduced, too. For the daughter of Ben Shalk this was a welcomed change. Her family was Sefardic in their approach to cooking in their home. Chicken and rice or Yorach was common at meal time. Pot roast was very rare and a penny was a Pinaka.

The Baron De Hirsch Fund supported the idea of the Community Center. It was not a Jewish Community Center but it served the entire community which meant the majority of the population was Jewish. This part of the experiment did work. But the Jewish community refused to subscribe to this new entity within their community.

Finally, before 1930, the religious people and the less religious people who wanted to see more English introduced into daily activity were not ready to accept the consequence of this action in their nice Jewish community.

Activities at the Community Center included dances. They attracted non-Jewish boys to Woodbine! Jewish girls dancing with non-Jewish boys was hardly the activity that the Jews of Woodbine wanted to see develop in this push to rush into the modern era! Mysteriously, the Center was set on fire and the activities were curtailed. This little episode meant that the Jewish community in Woodbine was not ready to sell its Jewish soul to become Americanized. The Jews themselves would allow the process of adopting the American culture within their own closed community. They were not about to assimilate or even mix with the non-Jewish community in social contacts.

The Great Depression came to Woodbine and affected the community. Less Jews lived here in Woodbine than ever before by this time. This meant a change for the remaining Jews. Food was always on the table in many homes inspite of the rubber, hat and clothing factories closing.

In 1933, the Shalks left for Atlantic City. Evolution of orthodoxy to conservative Judaism is looked at by the daily practices one does. Benjamin Shalk would begin his family's meal with blessings said at the table. After the move to Atlantic City, this practice would lesson.

By the early 1920's it was time to invest money and energy into the youth of Woodbine. The population decline of the 1910's was severe but not devastating for the entire Jewish community. Woodbine would lose 22% of its population from 1910 until 1915. Factory strife and lack of an agricultural future for the next generation left its mark on the community. By the end of the decade, the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School would close. Activities for children were suddenly put on hold.

The Jewish Welfare Board comes to the rescue of the Jewish children in Woodbine. At first, a playground was established by Esther Harrow. This social worker helped to formulate a plan of action in conjunction with the Jewish Welfare Board. Arts and crafts, rhythmic music and dancing announced the beginning of a new era in Woodbine. Various clubs formed in the school and a stage was built.

The initial outlay of money for this project was \$ 50,000 and \$ 6,000 annually was geared to help maintain this incentive programming. Mr. Mortimer Shiff, a communal leader proposed this action. The experiment was to last one and half years. Samuel Fleicher who was a Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund supported and encouraged this operation.

The circulating picture club was started in this fashion with Fleicher's own help. The Art Alliance of Philadelphia enhanced this program. Philadelphia musicians helped to entertain all the people in the community by giving free concerts! The Philadelphia Orchestra participated in this program. This was a new direction for an old town. Professor L. Mounier of the Vineland area Jewish Colonies helped to promote this very idea of culture earlier in that community.

Literature and athletics were added to the programming of the center. Well known names like Fredrich Nunn taught Art, Charles Prohasha who was the director of physical culture at Temple College in Philadelphia was joined by Alice Kraft as a teacher of dancing. More space was need. A club house was made out of a cottage. This is where the Sunday night dances were held until fire consumed it mysteriously in 1929.

Moese Siegel was born in Woodbine in 1914. His father, Abraham came to Woodbine in the 1890's. To Abraham and Fannie were born Mary, Eulaw and Moses. Abraham Siegel would gain employment in the Rabinowitz hat factory. In the 1910's, change would come to Woodbine and the factory workers would adopt new trades.

Abraham would learn to deal in the cattle business. Max Potasnik would sell his business to Abraham as he left Woodbine. The Siegels were now in the Kosher Meat business. For the next forty years, Abraham and Moses Siegel would serve the Jewish community and provide Kosher meats to the people of Woodbine.

The 1920's brought more change to Woodbine. The Immerman brothers would grow and leave Woodbine for more education outside of Woodbine.

Other people growing up would stay in town. One person was found in Zelda (Rabinowitz) Meranze. The Ladies Aid Society was active in this period. The society was an arm of the Jewish community. Poor people who passed thru Woodbine in the 1920's were provided services. Free burial were part of this communal organization's services. Zelda's mom was an active member as well as her aunt. People who had a solid commitment would follow their parents involvement in the community. Tzedaka was a tradition that would not be separated from Zelda's mom or Aunt Rabinowitz's life by a mere trip across the Atlantic Ocean. The many pushkas in Zelda's home was a symbol of this tradition. These collection boxes were the means by which a worthy Jewish cause was supported. This was done only in religious homes For Zelda it was a regular activity. When her mom would say blessings during various times of the week it was common to hear the plunk of coins dropping into these boxes.

These were the days when Zelda's Aunt Alta would changed her birth name to another name to fool the angel of death. This belief was real and occurrences similar to this were happening throughout Woodbine. Aunt Alta was married to Rabbi Joshua Kohn. The Rabbi would come to live in Woodbine as a result of this marriage.

Superstition played a great part in the new immigrants life eventhough they believed in religion. This folk religion was very strong in various groups of people who came to Woodbine. This idea of belief in customs was brought to this country with the people themselves. Whether the modern era arrived or not did not matter. For how could some one deal with the many tragedies that befelled the Jewish people in the Shetles of Europe. Misery, hardship and death followed the Jews to America, too. To fool the Devil (Jewish) meant to burn toe nail clippings and hair combings. This was done least the devil would come and find its victim in a small child. This could be explained in the times of high infant mortality. The Grip was a sure killer and Consumption would also find its way into this community but the devil was feared even more so by these people. Customs surrounded this fear in practice.

People were poor-poor in Woodbine but food was their solace. Most had plenty but little else. Shabbas meant bringing a person home from shul who no place to go or any food to eat. This was a great Jewish custom brought down from the past over the years. But during the Depression it took on new meaning. This was not only a mitzvah but the duty of every Jew who felt that he was religious. Rabbi Kohn brought this custom over from Europe with him when he arrived. But you didn't have to be a Rabbi to do this action

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

During the 1910's, the movie theatres were not open in town in on the Sabbath. This was a favorite social place come Saturday night. The day of rest had ended and everyone in town started a new week by coming out and into town on Saturday night after sun down. Dances were held at the Liberty Hall on Saturday nights.

During World War One even though the Army contracts to manufacturers were gained by the Woodbine companies. No work in these places was done on Shabbas. Rabinowitz's cap makers were off on that day. Shabbas was still Shabbas even in time of War in Woodbine.

Later on Mr. Lipman did run bus excursions to Sea Isle City on the Sabbath. Modern times were about to come to peaceful Woodbine!

No retirement funds or Social Security existed at this time but family unity and harmony brought the golden years to the elderly in Woodbine in dignity. This was done without hesitation or fanfare. This was Jewish life and the extended family was part of this tradition.

Daily prayer in Woodbine was held at various places. Two, three and even four synagogues were in operation right after World War One. Jews prayed in Woodbine three times per day as they did in Europe! This was done even on the worker's lunch break from the factories. People went home for lunch. Religious life and family was not two separate entities in Woodbine in the 1910's and 1920's.

Women kept their head covered on the streets of Woodbine. Many women wore shagis or wigs as per Jewish custom. This was a symbol of married life status. In the synagogue, women wore head shawls as a sign of reverence to G-d.

The Sabbath was ushered in by the men of Woodbine leaving work early on Friday afternoons. They would attend the Shivitz or Bathhouse off of Washington Avenue. Here the women were forbidden on Friday afternoons but they were welcomed on Thursdays and Sundays. For this was the women's time to make the Shivitz into a mikveh. This was a tradition in Woodbine since the 1890's. Family purity was an institution well known and practiced in Woodbine.

The Kosher bathhouse was maintained by both women and men who were pious Jewess and Jews in the community. The women were told that if they ever saw a man naked that they would "go blind". This tale was bolstered with tradition in this community. The "death wagon" used by the Chevra Kaddisha was kept nearby the bathhouse as a warning to those that might not think that this tale was true in modern times!

Yontav and Shabbas were special times in Woodbine. This was an entirely Jewish community like the Shetles of Europe. Tradition was the law of the village. This was Woodbine's heritage for two generations. You could taste Yontav in the air on Thursday and the day before a Jewish Holiday. The ladies would see the fish peddler and select white fish, Carp or pike to prepare for the special meal. Add herbs plus seasoning and this would permeate the air in a welcoming spiritual way for these special days.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregation's

Zelda Rabinowitz requested to attend the Talmud Torah. But no girls were admitted there in the 1910's. Synagogue life was pleasant experience for her family that she remembers well. Rabbi Kohn and David Potasnik were very good friends. David would wear a High Hat into the synagogue on the High Holidays. They sat next to each other close to the Tabah. The Tabah was situated in the middle of the sanctuary. This was the time in which Mr. Zussman who was a poor-poor Shochet chanted the prayers in shul. The Congregation was rich in this respect since he had a beautiful voice. The curtains in the balcony reached down past the knees of the women during this time.

Shabbas Goyim were used through out the Colony during this era. These were non-Jews who kindled the lights and tended the fire places so Jews could observe the Sabbath according to Jewish laws. In Woodbine, an Aruv or imaginary fence around the community existed. This would allow Jews to go about their business and not contain themselves. The people who who were very religious, even refrained from allowing this idea to take place in their minds. Those pious Jews continued to tie a handkerchief to their arm. The farmers who lived out in the wilderness would follow this tradition especially when it rained. They wore high golashes to synagogue. When they arrived at the shul, they would ascend the tall flight of steps leading up to the sanctuary. At the door steps they would remove their golashes and allow them to dry. The golashes were left standing guarding the door to the Synagogue until the men would leave for the journey home. But other Jews were religiously free to come and go as they pleased!

Visitors on Shabbas was a regular happening at the Rabinowitz household. Synagogue services, a fine meal, invitation of a stranger to eat a Shabbidik dinner and family was all that the first and second generation of Woodbiners needed to be united as Jews in a free land

There were many religious and pious Jews who were attracted for various reasons to Woodbine. For this area was known for its friendliness towards other Jews. Some stayed and others left.

This tradition had a history based on real events in Woodbine. Rabbi Louis B. Haas, a German Jew was selected by the Baron De Hirsch Fund for the Agricultural School in the early 1910's. Rabbi Haas added activities for the Agricultural School student population and the local people. This included a Sunday School on the grounds of the "Colony". Girls were not allowed or encouraged to attend Cheder or receive religious training at the Talmud Torah in Woodbine. But females did attend this new format for Jewish education at the Colony. The curriculum included Jewish stories of Creation, Jewish History and observation of Jewish Holidays. The language of instruction was done in Yiddish. Plays were conducted before the pilgrimage holidays of Sucoth, Passover and Shavouth.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

The big synagogue would be refurbished in the mid 1910's. The advent of a kitchen facilities would have to wait another decade before being installed. The Chazzon found in Mr. Zussman was an added delight. He was the Yankel Rosenblatt of Woodbine! It was at this time that Rabbi Haas organized a Young Judea Society in Woodbine. This was done at the time that the future of the Agricultural School's faith was being decided. The Shamus of the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue was found in Mr. Joffe. He also taught at the school. In addition he was a melamed and taught in the Talmud Torah. The Talmud Torah was open to all who wanted to learn whether your family could afford to pay the tuition or very little. Being Jewish was not a birth right in Woodbine but a sacred trust that needed the infusion of Jewish education for the growth of its community.

The boys learned at the Talmud Torah in groups of 12 to 15. They would recite over and over again their lessons in unison! The slow ones were not left out and the fast students couldn't rush ahead. This type of discipline was only unique to this type of school. The exceptional student went on to conduct the lessons while the teacher looked on in admiration!

The Shamus of the shul, Mr. Joffe conducted Sucas Services in the congregational member's homes. With Luvav and Estrog in hand, Mr. Joffe would come to Zelda's friend's home for this special service. This was one way in which Mr. Joffe supplemented his income in the town.

Later, Rev. Joffe would come to Zelda's home. Zelda got her mom to invite Rev. Joffe for Sucas as a tradition because of Zelda's interest.

In shul, this was a time of seeing the Balabitim wearing the High Hats and long tails. This was a tradition brought over from Europe. Especially when the English Jews arrived in Woodbine after the First World War this was a vital part of the decorum in the synagogue. The Jews who left England to come to Woodbine did so to escape her Majesty's Royal Armed Forces. Mr. Goodman was neighbor of the Rabinowitz family and at shul he would wear this attire on Yontav.

Come Simhas Torah, the people of the town would join together in celebration of the holiday in all the synagogues in Woodbine. The people would dance joyfully with their children and the Torahs. The schools were all closed for the Jewish holidays long before the Philadelphia public schools honored them. Jewish teachers would conduct public school lessons in ever greater numbers in the 1910's. But later this supply of Jewish staff members dried up as the young and energetic teachers moved out of town to seek their futures in the big cities.

Marriage outside of the Jewish religion was not acceptable to the Jewish community's ideals. The Liberty Hall dances were held on Friday nights. They were allowed to go on at the cost of tearing down the internal Jewish communal standards. Baseball games on Saturday outside of Woodbine was the norm. Zelda's parents would move during this time. Their new home was in the Strawberry Mansion section of Philadelphia.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Flo Benson's father and mother came to America in the 1890's. They were married here in America. Her mom was from Reega and Litvack. They arrived in America at an early age. Flo was born in New York City in 1893 at 234 Cherry Street. She was the oldest of six children. The family moved to Brooklyn by the turn of the century. Flo would occupy her time as a cashier at a small department store until she became married.

Though mutual friends Flo would meet her future husband, Jack Benson was living in Woodbine. In the year 1916, the couple were married. Jacob's family was from Woodbine and traveled to New York-City for the wedding. People were married at this time in their homes. Flo's parents used the empty apartment next door for the reception.

Jacob came to Brooklyn to work in the off season from the farm in Woodbine. The winter months had to be productive in order for them to survive. He would sell bakery goods from a wagon on the street. Sometimes, Jacob was the second person on a trolley car as its conductor. Jacob was a generous man, who often thought of his family first back in Woodbine before himself. He would buy up clothes for his sisters back in Woodbine all the time.

Married life would be different and challenging to this unique couple. Flora would bring her father down to Woodbine in 1916 to show him where she would be living. Flora's fathers' comments were, " I can't picture you going to a farm without electricity and running water!"

From Brooklyn to the woods of Woodbine was a big change. But Flora readily accepted this notion. Jacob had plans of grandeur. He intended to fix up the place and add other rooms to a dwelling he lived in at the time in Woodbine. Jacob offered his new bride a new life!

Flora thought immediately that she would just love this new way of life. This was "Bersheret" or in Jewish " meant to be". Jacob sensibly offered his new bride a diamond ring or furniture. Flora's response was " what do I need a diamond ring on a farm "? She took the furniture! There were five rooms in the house that the couple moved into in Woodbine. One room was converted into a powder room. Flora could not get use to the " out house " ! So Jacob went to Sears and Roebucks and bought a chemical toilet.

Every room was covered with linoleum or oil cloth. A kitchen and a dining room were added. As the children came along, more rooms were added until 10 or 11 rooms were built. A big sun porch and parlor were built, too. This an original Baron De Hirsch Home.

Jacob and Flora lived on Fremont Avenue not far from Jacob's parents' farm. There was no electricity in this house at this time. Jacob would buy lamps with mantles that burned gas. They would have to be pumped every so often to turn them on. They looked liked electric lights.

Jacob would make his own electricity. He bought the Delco System. These were big glass batteries that powered a generator. He bought a wringer type washing machine that was connected to this system. These were all the comforts of Brooklyn but only down on the farm

The C.C. Camp or Conservation Camp started during the Roosevelt administration in the 1930's. The men would clean up the woods and do road work. At this time in Woodbine, they were running Electricity to the town. The Bensons would switch to electricity. But the family would have to buy an electric stove as a pre-condition. Flo used gasoline or the white lead free type for cooking up until this time. She used it for a long time until the cat scattered pots and pans on the stove. This was the time to switch for safety!

Change was nothing new for the Benson family. In fact, during 1902, Jacob's grandfather's brother changed his name as he entered the United States Navy. It was originally, Bensonovich. Another part of the family changed it to Benjamin. Jacob's grandfather adopted this name of Benson for himself. He was a carpenter and actually helped to build the big shul in Woodbine. Originally, the Bensonovich clan settled in Carmel and later came to Woodbine in the late 1890's.

Belonging to a synagogue was part of the couple's culture. Flo joined the sisterhood in later years as it was formed. The actual sisterhood helped to develop and create the need for kitchen facilities inside the big shul. This would take effect in the late 1920's. The sisterhood baked cakes, Challahs and knishes plus other Jewish novelties. The women were not allowed to bake those items in their own home if they intended to use these items at functions of the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue. Kashrut in the shul was very strict and adhered to for Yontav and other Jewish festivities. Rabbi Taishoff arrived in the late 1920's in Woodbine and enforced this women's endeavor.

At home Flo was a good cook and better than average baker. She made Gefilte fish for every Friday night. The fish peddler sold fish cheap. The fish were caught in Mauricetown near Port Elizabeth. Chicken soup and fresh chicken were a Friday night ritual throughout Woodbine. Tzmmies or carrots and raisins and kugels or noodle desserts were common dishes every Friday night, too. And of course there were the yeast cakes. On a daily basis, Flo would bake donuts. Corn muffins were ready for breakfast daily. There was always food on the table.

Sweet potatoes were popular delights. A 100 acre farm was a productive place! Here, cream cheese and sour cream plus cheese were plentiful. Milk was always available. Flo's mother-in-law would make the Challah and bread regularly. When Flo's mother-in-law wanted to eat bread she did not want it to be sweet and pastry-like. So Flo made the pastry.

Jacob was not strictly observant but he respected tradition and followed what he could as a farmer. This did not stop Flo from being more observant. But times in Woodbine would change and not lend themselves to a more realistic religiously observant lifestyle. Flo stopped being Kosher in the strictest sense when the last Shochet left town in the late 1930's. Jacob did not want to travel and go to where the Shochet moved to buy the freshly slaughtered chickens that were killed Kosher!

Up until this time, their chickens were slaughtered Kosher by the Shochet. The fresh chickens were not from their own livestock. The chickens on the farms at the Benson's were only used for egg production. Jacob said he would kill the chickens just like the Shochet. But the Shochet was a pious man and Flora did not want to be labeled a hypocrite.

The Kosher butchers in Woodbine included the Siegels and Cutler. Even though Flora did not buy Kosher chickens, she continued to buy Kosher meats. Veal and brisket were popular items on her table. She would stuff the veal with breading. Heart and Lung bones were also used! This was called Fium Tzmmies. Stuffed necks or Helzcer included chicken fat, onions and flour. She made potato kanels and she added this to carrot tzmmies. It was very GOOD!

Jacob huckstered vegetables and fruits to the hotels in Atlantic City. In return, he would buy in bulk quantities items his family would use. This included sugar and flour. Jacob would bring home 25 pounds of prunes and bananas for use on the farm. These Jews made fresh compote with bananas!

Religious observance in this household would not completely follow the preceding generation. Jacob's parents were Shomre Shabbas Jews. This was done on the farm before World War One. Morning prayers were said in this farm house in Woodbine with all family members present.

Now Flora would not cook on Shabbas. Although she was not religious. For Pesach, she did keep two sets of separate dishes. This was a distinction that set her apart from her in-laws who could only afford but one set of dishes during this period in the late 1890s and early 1900's

Some traditions would not cease with time. This included the big tub that was used to kasher all the glassware, before the arrival of Passover. Jacob's Zadye would kasher all the silverware in the ground behind the farm house. This tradition continued into the 1930's in Woodbine.

Matzoh was bought and sold by the shul. The Woodbine Brotherhood sold the Matzoh to the people in the community for the celebration of Passover. Hermie Rosenthal was in charge of this activity. In the 1930's, Larry Benson would help his father deliver the Matzoh with horse and wagon to their neighbors into the night before the onset of Passover. This was a time when the factories were still closed for the Sabbath in Woodbine.

Rabinowitz and Feldman of the hat factories were the Machors and leaders of the big shul. During the First World War it was important that the Matzoh was delivered early. The factories would close early before the holidays to ensure that this would happen in the town.

Jewish life in Woodbine would cater to Judaism in various ways. The Basketball team in Woodbine was an active part of the community since Woodbine built its first synagogue. Into the 1930's, non-Jews and even Blacks made up the team. But traditions never change! Signs were shouted out in Yiddish by all who played the game. And all the players talked Yiddish, too!

On Yontav, the 2½ mile walk to shul was long. This gave the people time to think about their religious obligations.

The women would sit in the balcony upstairs. This tradition would continue into the 1970's and 1980's. Flora would sit with her neighbors and friends. This included Mrs. Fietz, Mary Levy and others. Her sons would sit downstairs in one section and look over their shoulders skyward as they searched for their mother in the balcony.

Preparation time for Bar Mitzvah would pass by swiftly for Larry Benson. The Talmud Torah had a game room where all the children gathered before class. This was a favorite place to meet one's friends. But Larry took his lessons from the Rabbi and Mr. Zoss who was the Shamus. Rev. Zoss would teach him Chumash or Bible. In the 1930's, there were four classrooms in the Talmud Torah next to the Shul. This was a community Hebrew School and one did not have to be a member of the big synagogue in order to attend. Fifteen to twenty children per class were grouped together according to their abilities. Daily classes and Sunday School was in session but no Sabbath School existed here. Rabbi Benn was here by the time Larry was to become a Bar Mitzvah. Rabbi Benn was a modern man and he did not grow a beard. The bimba was in the middle. The children all sat together in one section between the Reader's table and the Aron Kodesh. Larry followed the tradition of his father and grandfather in this matter.

Tashlich was observed in the community by all the congregations. This was done at the Belle Plain Forrest. The Congregation of the Woodbine Brotherhood would break the fast of Yom Kippur in the vestry room downstairs. The community of Woodbine was miles away from any urban Jewish setting. The newly furnished kitchen of the 1920's was utilized fully by the women. The whole community was mispoaha or family. Family was all-important in this hamish town.

The yellow shul was fortunate in having caring men to conduct its services. Leadership was found in the Shochet, Mr. Goldberg. People who lived on the Northern side of the railroad tracks generally belonged to the Yellow or "small Shul". The two synagogues had two cemeteries for their members. With the closing of the Jewish Agricultural School in Woodbine in 1917, meant that the fourth congregation would dissolve. Rabbi Haas would leave town. Mr. Baer's shul would exist until the end of the Second World War. After the conclusion of that war there was no more need for the clothing factories in Woodbine due to the lack of renewed Army contracts. As the factories started to shut down, people were leaving Woodbine. Jewish people were leaving, too. Very few sons would return to the soil for a living.

A movement to besiege the Southern New Jersey area grew and developed before the outbreak of the War. The newcomers as they were called would number 10 to 20 families of German origin in the countryside near Woodbine. They included the Golstein's, Goldberg's, Schwab's, Gottlieb's, Gross, Maxmunzer's, Wolf and the Grig's to mention a few. These Jews were the new farmers of the land. Yet they only lived on the land and did not farm it but raised poultry for profit.

Flora and Jacob Benson lived on the farm for 52 continuous years. A mitzvah to the land itself and a mitzvah in their commitment to their family life style. By comparison, Allen Meyers Great Grandfather would top this enormous achievement. Max Meyerowitz went out to the farm land in upper Bucks County in the Perkiomen Valley. Max stayed on the land for 53 years.

The staying power of some Jewish families on the land was unmatched! Larry's brother lived on the farm. He bought a butcher shop in Woodbine. He had two incomes after his father died in 1969. It was a gentlemen's farm but he stayed here until he passed away in the 1980's.

The reason for this change can be measured in variety of ways. Larry graduated high school in 1946. There was a depletion of children in Woodbine. So Larry like others would graduate from high school in Millville. After graduating, he left for New York City to make a living.

Later in 1950' Larry was drafted into the Marine Corps. Larry would return to Woodbine to help his family. He went into his father's business of fresh killed chickens. The plant was located in Norma. This was done in conjunction with Mr. Rothman who was an old time family in the Alliance-Norma area. Four hundred people would eventually work for this factory. But steady and stable factory work such as the Benson and Rothman operation would not exist in Woodbine after the Second World War. Change in factory production meant a change in the Jewish community of Woodbine as a whole. This was a real economy in Woodbine, when people came from Dennisville and Cape May Court House to work. The factories drew workers from all these areas. These factory workers did their shopping in Woodbine. Two drug stores, four or five grocery stores, general clothing stores, meat market, fish shops and two movie theatres were a drawing card for this town at one time. The railroad ran through Woodbine on its way to the shore and helped to support this local trade. Even a bowling alley and a skating rink existed in Woodbine during the 1930's.

Mary (Breslow) Levy's mom and dad were married in Woodbine in the 1890's. Ida and Barnett Breslow brought seven Jewish children into the new world. Mary was the youngest of the seven. She recalls her father coming from Reega and her mother hailed from Poland. Both arrived in America in 1895.

Barnett and his parents arrived in America together. He was only 15 years old then. The parents sent their child to a new land to escape the Czar's Army. Why come to Woodbine? Barnett's parents wanted to locate in a place to live where they could keep the Jewish Sabbath. Barnett was a carpenter and a worker of silk. These people were not poor.

Mary's mother worked in a factory in Woodbine at an early age. Barnett helped to build the big synagogue in Woodbine. Ida and Barnett were married in their house in Woodbine on March 15, 1896. The synagogue was not ready then!

Mary's parents met in the typical fashion for Woodbiners. The men would congregate outside of the factory and watch the girls. Max Potasnik was amongst this group. Max was in the cattle business and owned the ice plant in town. The group said that they would keep an eye out for Ida. But Barney got the best deal.

David and Duba or Dora Breslow lived in Woodbine, too. The families lived on the Northern side of the Railroad tracks. This was the opposite side of the tracks from the new shul. The family lived on Washington Street. David Breslow was in charge of the Bathhouse. The women went on Thursday and the men went on Friday afternoon before the start of Shabbas. Running water in Woodbine at this time was unheard of inside the houses!

Many families in Woodbine had large families. Ida and Barnett's family consisted of seven. Birandle or Blanche was born on December 16th, 1896. Ada was born on April 6th, 1898. Jacob was born on August 19th, 1899. Fannie was born on February, 26th, 1901. Samuel was born on May 15th, 1902. Israel was born on October 20th, 1904. Miriam (Mary) was born on December 25th, 1907.

Life for these children unfolded in the 20th century in Woodbine. Ida and her husband moved across the street from her mother-in-law. This arrangement would happen quite often in America but with one slight change. The Breslows out house was in the rear of the home. The cows and chickens were out there, too.

Religious life and attendance at the synagogue would play a big part in Jacob Breslow's life. For the ushering in of the High Holidays meant special prayers of supplication would be given at midnite the week before Rosh Ha Shannah. Jacob would walk across the railroad tracks to the synagogue at this late hour to participate in this ritual. Active participation for Ida before the holidays would be more rigorous. She had to go to the shochet with live chickens. This was done so the shochet would kill the poultry according to Jewish law. A man sold chickens in Eldora some 15 to 20 miles away. The Breslows like many Jews in Woodbine would not use their own chickens for eating!

Mary would go to the shochet with her mother. When Mary's niece came down from Long Island, she would tag along, too. Her niece would be anxious and asked when are they going " to kill the chickens ". After coming home from the shochet, the girls would sit and pluck the chickens of their pin feathers.

This was a well kept secret for many years. As Dorothy got married, this remained a secret. But one Thanksgiving, the cat slipped out of the bag. Dorothy remarked to her husband, Dick about having a difficult time holding a turkey. Everyone asked her how come? Dorothy went onto explain about her trips to the shochet in Woodbine. There was laughter and an uproar in the room. It was so loud you could not hear the grandfather clock tick!

There was the fish peddler in Woodbine who went to the Maurice River to capture his catch. Live Carp was brought in fresh to Woodbine. Ida Breslow always was treated like a lady by these men. In return, she treated the peddlers like people. Even the man from Eldora, who was not a Jew was given Matzoh and instructions on how to prepare fried Matzoh! Big beautiful chickens and large eggs were delivered to their house every Passover in return. Mr. Powell was very well respected in this manner. Mrs. Breslow never asked him if the chickens weighed an extra ounce! She never asked for a lessor chicken either!

The fish peddler provided fresh fish right outside his home in Woodbine. They kept the fish in little tanks and tubs. This would give way to less care in this market. The fish would be stored in a bathtub with the same fishy water in the people's home. This was done to insure that the ladies had their own fish ready for Yontav. Later, the fish peddlers would kill the fish and wrap them in newspapers if the ladies were going to use them that evening.

The fish peddlers like the community did change. Ida would have to travel to Atlantic City to get her fish for the holidays. This would include white fish, mullet and carp. Now in the 1930's, Mary and her mother would make the trip together for the fish as Mary became married.

Mary married Arthur Levy at this time. Tradition would carry over in married life. Arthur rigged up a little grinder for Mary to use in the kitchen. The fish was placed in a wooden bowl. This was a usual custom in Woodbine.

During Passover time the " Shacisor " was brought out for use. This was a pestal. It was used for the Horactezes or the bitter herbs to be pulverized. It was also used to grind the ginger and cinnamon, too. This pestal was shined before it was used.

Family celebrations in the extended family included a big surprise for Ida's birthday. Barnett would bring out the large Samavor and make tea for her! He would bake a hunkleberry strudel that was absolutely impossible to duplicate! Meat was a plentiful item in this family's diet. Mary's grandparents would cater to these needs in special ways. This was passed on in later years, too. Zayde David Breslow would take the calf's feet from the butcher's store and put them on a pan in the back of the stove to get the hair off of the hoof. He would then salt and soak it according to Jewish tradition. This was then cooked with hearty spices and boiled eggs. Pechav was a winter delight for many Jews in Woodbine. Barnet would add the special touch of flavor to this dish that everyone Jewish enjoyed.

Barnett would make a hot mustard sauce with Coleman's mustard as its base. This was then eaten with a piece of challah. This soothed the Jewish soul on a cold winter day.

For Yontav, Talach was made. This was dough cooked in honey. It was bread like dough and it was wet. Small pieces were then tied in a knot after the honey and sugar were added in a pan and the mixture started to boil. The dough was placed in the pan to cook. This was then served with kmiche bread. This was a cookie dough cut into strips and covered with a cocoa mixture. A marble effect was created as it was stirred. These delights were all parve. So they could be served with meat or dairy meals. That meant that no butter was used in its preparation. Barnett did use oil. In Philadelphia, he wrote to the Crisco Shortening company for information on its product. The company wrote back to inform him that the shortening was made of 100% vegetable oil.

Peroqan was another favorite in this family. This Jewish delicacy was home made. All the women in Woodbine would go to the Kosher Butchers shops looking for the hearts with lungs parts. The first women who came, got this bounty first. Ida would roast the heart with the lung with a lot of onions. Then Ida would grind them together. She would make a dough and fill a meat pie. She would then bake it until golden brown. She would bake it with beef fat. This the secret of its flavor.

For Yontav, Ida would make her own noodles and lucien. Ida made three kinds. She would make cut farfel into little squares. Ida made a broader noodle for the soup and a finer noodle for her kugels. For a wedding present, she received a long paring knife and a wash basket set from Mr. Bayard. This was Barnett's boss. Wheat barley was generously used in the soups. Barley potato soup was common in the Breslow house and would often be cooked with meaty soup bones.

The Yontav meal would start off with Chicken soup and lucien or farfel. Tzmmies made of carrots and sweet potatoes and some fine piece of meat were served at the table. Wine for the Kiddush was set out on the table. Barnett made his own wine. He bought his own grapes. A friend of the family made soda water in Woodbine. Barnett bought a glass jug from him for this purpose. He would add some pure alcohol to the jug. The jug had a little neck to it. When the berry season came along, the new berries would be added to the brew. Gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries and kerns plus hunkle berries were mixed in for flavor. And when the oxhard berries came out in season, they were added, too. This wine jug then contained a very potent and powerful mixture.

Wine was used only for ritual in this household and for good reason. When Barnett had Yazhreit to observe in the shul, he would bring a fifth of this wine and a honey cake to synagogue.

For the Kiddush at the shul, Barnett treated everyone to his special brew. Some of the older men could drink. One man asked him, "where did he get this?" His reply was in Yiddish, "what is the difference!" Drink, the men could not bring themselves to do it! A man named Mr. Becker wanted a glass of his wine. But Barnett warned him to take a little glass. Mr. Becker thanked Barnett. Mr. Becker said, "if he drank the big glass of wine that he could never go home that way"

There was a big minyan that attended synagogue at Agudas Achim. Still, until the eleventh man came to the shul, they did not start to daven. Woodbiners believed in superstition. This would carry over in America, even in religious life. Food was the life blood of the Jewish soul. This kept the Devil away from taking a Jewish soul!. These people ate more food than many Jewish communities. The men would talk about what they ate for breakfast as they waited in the synagogue for the eleventh man to arrive.

The return to factory life after the Jewish Holidays was slow but sure. The days would grow long and finally the men returned home from the factories. After dinner, the stoves were cleaned. The sweet potatoes were put in the rear of the wood stoves to cook. By the afternoon, Mary would deliver the sweet potatoes to the girls at the Moskowitz Sweater factory. This was a treat! She would visit her older sister. Next she would deliver the sweet potatoes to the Machine and Tool factory. Mary's mom would leave food items in big bags in the kitchen. She would say, "don't take more than you can finish to the children!"

Barnett would come home for lunch daily and see the children. But he would read the Yiddish newspapers at the table. Ida wanted the children to tell her what they did at school all day. Finally, Ida told the children to leave the kitchen one day. They did. Barnett asked her where had all the children gone. Ida replied, "you are reading, so read!" He stopped this practice and made time for his family!

Barnett would read the Yiddish Velt or the Jewish World newspaper out of New York. Later, he would subscribe to Jewish magazines. He would read the Jewish recipes out of the magazines. This way, Mary knew how to make chopped herring. Later in life, she would make and sell this item as her donor for the sisterhood in Woodbine.

The Talmud Torah was built in 1902 next to the big shul. The vestry room was used for daily minyan and a nursery school. A kindergarten was held here, too. The kitchen was added next to the vestry room for ladies activities. These were the days that the Eisenbergs lived next to the shul and watched over it. In the 1930's, there were no Cantors at the synagogue. This time period would give way to the late 1930's. Fully ordained Rabbis would be elected to lead this congregation.

Rabbi Harold Lasker stayed here from 1938 until 1939. Rabbi Alter Abelson came here in 1939 and stayed until the outbreak of the Second World War. Then arrived the well known and loved Rabbi Henry J. Benn. He stayed in Woodbine for one generation. The community was changing by this time. It was now 40% Jewish but still was noted for its Jewish outlook.

By the 1950's, Barnett's grandson was ready for his Bar Mitzvah. The synagogue was in between Rabbis. Barnett taught his grandson Lawrence the maftir for his Bar Mitzvah. Arthur Levy grew up in South Philadelphia and attended the Furness School near 3rd and Mifflin Streets. His parents left Philadelphia for health reasons.

Arthur and Mary got married at Rabbi Moishe Shapiro's house in Atlantic City. Arthur worked for Wolf and Crane as a rug salesman. Later in the 1940's, the couple came to live in Woodbine. He would become a Boro clerk and a health inspector. The four room high school in Woodbine was long since gone. But the Yellow Shul was still in existence. The Goldberg's were instrumental in running the shul. The little shul would set up its own cemetery.

The Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue hired Mr. Goldberg to teach the children their Hebrew lessons. The two synagogues were similar in some ways but worlds apart in others. If you didn't have money for the community Hebrew School you went free! The men of the factories were big gamblers and they didn't have money for a lot of things. But they all contributed to the Talmud Torah. The Ladies Aid Society, was the relief of the poor people in the community in later years and not just outsiders. The women contributed money to the Talmud Torah, too. Mr. Korman, Morris Kohen and Barnett Brewlow were interested in the Talmud Torah. These men went around to collect monies at the factories during the 1940's so that the children of Woodbine could get a Jewish education. Rev. Zoss would go to the house and teach some of the girls. Mary's sister learned in this fashion.

The next generation would take its place in Woodbine. The Talmud Torah was closed at the same time the students of the high school were transported to Millville for further education. The place where the Talmud Torah once stood was once a vacant lot and overgrown with weeds in the 1950's.

The synagogue was strong in this regard. The Talmud Torah was gone but not the desire to educate the young. The preceding generation had done its job of preparing itself for the changing of the guard after the conclusion of the Second World War. Those that remained in Woodbine were products of this development only one generation earlier. Now as Ida was involved in the Woodbine Brotherhood sisterhood, so would her Mary do the same!

This was an active time in the synagogue. The depletion of children in Woodbine was soon a thing of the past. Within ten short years, there were more children growing up in Woodbine as in years past. Mrs. Elliot Goldman taught music and kindergarten. A sisterhood choir was formed with the inclusion of Mrs. Seymour Benson, Mrs. Lottie Benjamin, Mrs. Jules Cooper, Mrs. Sol Linowitz, Mrs. Arthur Levy, Mrs. Jacob Benson, Mrs. Jacob Siegel, Mrs. Robert Oberfirst, Mrs. Herman Singer, Mrs. David Stein and Mrs. Arthur Kessler. Mary's best friend in Flo Benson was the best singer in the group.

A great sense of community existed in the Jewish people of Woodbine of this time. No people were left off to the sidelines. Everyone was welcomed at the affairs of the shul. The sisterhood ran dances and made dinners. They charged reasonably priced tickets for \$ 3 each a couple during the 1950's. This money went to the United Jewish Appeal. The women went door to door to collect for the UJA with baby carriages. Mary's slogan was " you want to give, okay, If you don't give that was fine" The women wanted to be in the community. They did not work, whereas the Polish women had to work in the remaining factories. The Jewish women collected for the community's needs, too! This included the Red Cross. The Jewish women worked hard for all the organization. Hazer, the Mother Superior had to step in to solve a real crisis in Woodbine at this time. She was from Sea Isle City but helped the Polish Catholic families in many ways.

True, the Jewish women collected for the Red Cross. One woman said to Mary, " we don't give to the Jewish Red Cross!" Mary's response was, " since when was the American Red Cross the Jewish Red Cross?" Jewish women of this time period and especially in Woodbine did not work and the two income families in America was still thirty years away. This episode was brought to the attention of Mother Hazer. She prompted action. She announced to the Polish Catholic Community in Woodbine, " that the Red Cross was not only for Jews". This put an end to this community crisis.

During the Second World War, there was a hat, rubber and two clothing factories and a children's wear factory in Woodbine. When the state of Israel was declared a reality, non-Jews donated money to the new Jewish homeland, too. Simhas Torah parties were not as calm and polite as in the preceding generation in Woodbine. This time, no pictures were taken of the merrymakers. Tradition was re-instated. Mr. Rabinowitz who owned the hat factory insisted that all the children should wear hats. Especially in synagogue. Mr. Rabinowitz was a very macho person and yet a Torah striving Jew! As he paraded with the Torah during this sacred holiday he would say to the women, " why kiss the Torah, when you could kiss me? The women enjoyed his humor and they did just that! He became the fence around the Torah and no women kissed the Torah during this holiday.

Hebrew school instruction would pick up after the Jewish High Holidays. In the 1940's, a Rabbi was not teaching at the Talmud Torah. Mary's oldest nephew would come over to Barnett and inform him of the harsh discipline and abuse that the shochet would give his students. Barnett was incensed and horrified at this development. For not only did he help to support the Talmud Torah but he was involved in other ways. The kids attending the Talmud Torah knew Mr. Breslow by his first name. Barney's shop was across the street and often he was seen at the Talmud Torah. The kids would stop into his shop and inquire what Barney was working on now.

Barney went over to the Talmud Torah and told Rev. Mischler that he should not take a stick and hit any child who wanted to learn. Soon afterwards, this melamed made up his mind to leave town.

Rev. Goldberg of the Tiferes Israel shul was soon employed in this capacity. He was a very good story teller. The Jewish children enjoyed him and the Talmud Torah utilized his services until it ceased to exist.

Jewish tradition continued as the community entered its 60th year. For Selicos services were conducted whereas some congregations stopped this tradition due to a lack of interest in the Philadelphia area. Tradition was passed from one generation to the next generation in Woodbine. This tradition was continuous. For Sucas, the older men were served wine and whiskey in the vestry room of the big synagogue. Some things never change. Egg kichel and honey cake assisted the celebration. Tashliech was conducted as in the past on the road past the cemetery on the way to the Belle Plain Forrest into the 1950's.

This commitment to Judaism by the Woodbine Jews was the very essence of their existence in the town in the 1950's. The sisterhood was strong in this movement into the future. The green glass dishes were very heavy and a symbol of the sisterhood's effort to make the synagogue solid.

Frances Siegel and Peachie Swirly organized a spaghetti dinner. Of course they would use Kosher meat for its preparation. Jack Siegel had a Kosher meat market at this time and donations were made by him in a generous way. The meatballs and tomato sauce were made in the shul itself. In the meantime, Mary asked the non-Jews in the area if they would come for this affair.

One such conversation went like this, "how does a Jew come to make spaghetti and meatballs?" Mary said, "you wait and see!" Mary's recollections of the non-Jews spaghetti dinners were pure delight. She recalls that when the Gentiles got together to do this social function, each person was assigned a part of the job. One would make the meatballs. Another made the sauce. And the end result was no Taste! Now Mary took this challenge very strongly and said to her friend Lil, "there is one thing that we are going to have and that is Taste!" Mary went onto to describe their sauce as sour as could be because there was no sugar at all in the recipe.

The Gentiles came to test the Jew's spaghetti sauce. They came with little Teplahs or little pots. Their expectations could be no more incorrect. This potpourri was sold for take out!

First the Polish beautician that Mary used, tried some. They were curious. An extra meatball and plenty of sauce was put into each pot. It didn't take long before the non-Jews were back in line with bigger pots to scoop up this Jewish spaghetti and meatballs!

Lil said, "where did you girls get this recipe?" The spaghetti was sold out for take out quickly. The sisterhood had a lot of fun and made a lot of money at the same time. This was truly an innovative sisterhood fund raiser that was soon not to be duplicated!

Passover was one of the times in the Synagogue when Yiskor or remembrance of the deceased meant the recitation of special prayers. It was during this time that it was a rare opportunity to see everyone from the outlying areas all at once. There was standing room only.

Just as the tradition of Tashlich, Shamones or parading with the Torahs, apples and flags on Simhas Torah was practiced meant that new traditions would develop in a new land.

Initially, the pioneers did okay by themselves. Now with a mixture of population and passing of time led to the Shamus or caretaker of the shul in finding his replacement. The synagogue's Shabbas Goi was developed in this manner. Many service people came to the community of Woodbine. A good many were Polish immigrants after World War One. Mr. Adolph Filacheck's family was amongst this influx. Adolph as a young child would be given candy for lighting the Gartman's stove before and after the Sabbath. Rev. Zoss, the Shamus at the big shul asked little Adolph if he would assist him in his chores. This was okayed by his parents. This would turn out to be a lifetime task!

This was the 1930's and the Woodbiners would see a changing air about their town. German refugees from Hitler's new Germany would leave before he actually came to power. These Jews made their way to Woodbine as part of a movement to settle on the land in Southern New Jersey and become poultry farmers in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Most communities did not see these Jews until after the time to exterminate the Jews was in high gear in Europe.

This was the time in 1932, that Herman Rosenfeld went into the farm supply business. The refugees met a friend in Herman Rosenfeld. Even though this was the Depression years and it did come Woodbine would only slow down the efforts of Herman. He gave these people credit for the items that they so desperately needed even if they had no money. About 12 refugee families out of 15 new arrivals joined the big synagogue. These people purchased 15 acre farms and were religiously observant to some extent. These people were knowledgeable of their Judaism even if they did not practice it fully in Germany.

The three agricultural holidays in the Jewish calendar which included Sucas, Passover and Shavous took on a new and revitalized meaning in Woodbine. Mr. Schwab was the leader of the new comers as they were called. Up until this time, there was no cantor at the big synagogue during this time. Rabbi Taishoff had died in the 1930's and a leader was not immediately hired during the Depression. The German Jews helped to put the Sucas behind the shul and collect the greens for its decoration.

The need for a fully ordained Rabbi was ordered by this new group. This was the norm in Germany even if the State did pay the Rabbi's wages. By 1939, Woodbine would have its formal Rabbi in 50 years.

Jewish children participated at a greater level of involvement at the synagogue during this time period. For Shavous, the schools in Woodbine were all closed. No writing was permitted as part of the requirements for this holiday.

For Thanksgiving, the sisterhood conducted a dinner. This would include 6 large turkeys that were slaughtered Kosher. The turkeys were stuffed and served to 130 people in the late 1950's. This was the time of the Ecumenical services. Jews would join in with other community denominations and give thanks for this bounty here in America. In Southern New Jersey, these dinners helped to offset the costs of running the synagogue. You couldn't ask people everytime to donate. So this was a good alternative.

A young man, Sam Pollack came from Philadelphia and he opened up a grocery store. He was a big benefactor of these dinners. Sam would even carve the turkeys and serve, too!

The best part of these affairs was kitchen work. This was fun and social at the same time. These events were not announced in the newspapers due to limited facilities at the synagogue. This was the flavor of the synagogue at its best. For entertainment, plays were put on and conducted by Flo Keyer. Refreshments were served. The socials were all fund raisers for the synagogue.

The Levy's stayed in Woodbine for a long period of time. This included the passing of parents and the maturing of Her children. In the 1980's, Arthur Levy passed away and today at age 80, Mary Levy has left Woodbine to live in Vineland. Fitting into a newly adapted Jewish community is not easy when one considers the time and effort it takes to build this atmosphere.

Herman Rosenfeld was born in Woodbine in 1914. He was named for his grandparents. They were Sefardic. For Herman has the same name as his Zayde. Herman's Hebrew name would be Chaim. This young boy would be named for two relatives. The other one being Harris Joffe on his mother's side. Zayde Rosenfeld was born in Russia and was a hotel keeper. When he came to America and then to Woodbine in the late 1890's, he ran the hotel across the street from the railroad station in Woodbine.

Young Herman grew up by going to the Talmud Torah. This was a daily part of his normal routine. Jewish education was transmitted to some 35 to 40 children here in the late 1910's and early 1920's. The Ladies Auxiliary became the sisterhood. This happened as the first generation gave way to the next generation of congregatants at the Woodbine Brotherhood synagogue.

Yiddishkeit was Woodbine at this time. For Passover, you could hear the girls playing the nuts game and smell the fish cooking through out the whole town. This smell was not new to the countryside by the arrival of the First World War. Woodbine would be celebrating some thirty years of existence by now. When darkness settled upon the whole town, everything was closed. Families made Kiddush together in their homes. The matzoh was brought in by the shul for sale. The matzoh was stored downstairs in the vestry room. The Ladies Auxiliary would call all Jewish families in the 1920's for their matzoh orders.

Hamtashen was baked in the Shul for the celebration of Purim. The community would produce Rabbis, too. One person was found in Rabbi Eilberg. Herman Rosenfeld stayed in Woodbine and became married. He was raised here and he raised his family here!

Mark Singer's Zayde was an original settler in Woodbine in the early 1890's. Mayer Singer came from Russia and was a trained barber. When the people in Dennisville refused to cut the hair of the Jews, Mayer set up his own business in Woodbine. The Singers were plentiful in the community. Herman Singer would stay in Woodbine and marry Pearl.

When Mayer was called to the Torah at the big shul, he usually didn't answer. The balabim would call him by his trade name, "Zinger the Barber". Ninety percent of the Jews in Woodbine were Askenazic Jews from many different countries. But most of the people were Russian Jews. Later, the British Jews arrived in Woodbine. These Jews were Sefardic in ritual. Mannie Smith was such a person.

Nick names were given and kept quite frequently. Mark Singer's grandmother was Anna Swilling. Swilling in her home language meant twins. Twins were in her family. Her grandfather was known as Dutch Swilling.

Anna was a good cook. She would board out teachers who stayed in town. She let a man named Mr. Elgard stay over who owned a factory during the Depression years. He left a ten dollar tip! She offered to return it, thinking that it was a mistake. Mr. Elgard insisted that she keep it for the wonderful Jewish meal he was served at the house. Since he left Russia, he had not tasted such delights that included Pechav.

Mark's father's name was "Chizler Singer". The men of Woodbine in the 1920's played alot of pool. Choking up on the pool stick was called "chizling down". Someone at a pool contest asked Herman to use this technique. The people nearby cheered him on as "Yeah Chizler".

Baseball continued on as a favorite past time in Woodbine. The Woodbine Oilers were headed by Peter De Sink. Now he is the Meadowlands fame.

Integration in Woodbine meant a variety of ideas in this time period. In the nearby country side, Woodbine was looked upon as a city. This was the only Southern New Jersey town that was integrated by 1950.

Cape May County was prejudice in this regard for many years. Signs on its beaches warned of "No Jews, Catholics or dogs" in years past. Ocean City, only a short distance away from Woodbine was a place few Jews ventured into in the 1920's and 1930's. But Moishe Cohen had his fruit store on 10th Street in Ocean City and Wildwood had a small Jewish community. Some relatives went to Sam Levenson's place to "Summer out" when they had no money. Lake Numie was constructed for a recreation area by the Civil Conservation Corps in the 1930's. Mr. Miesel was instrumental in this development and Jews nearby had a place to relax the Summer away. The area was formally a cranberry bog.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Mark Singer was born in the late 1940's in Woodbine. He was the third generation of Singers to live in Woodbine. The Talmud Torah was torn down in 1952. The little synagogue closed in 1956. Their cemetery is looked after by the big shul. The changes that occurred after the conclusion of the Second World War was not relevant to only Woodbine. Jack Seigel's Kosher Butcher shop closed in 1957. Urban change, meant movement of Jews to the cities such as Philadelphia for Woodbine. This was a time period of condensing the Jewish community in the region into a smaller one. By 1958, 300 Jews lived in Woodbine out of a total population of 2500

Rabbi Benn was followed in time by Rabbi Kaufman. Rabbi Weisberger would leave and relocate to Allentown. Woodbine became a place for Rabbis to gain some communal experience and then move onto a greater challenge. Rabbi Cohen and Rabbi Kramer followed and they were the last Rabbis with children to stay in Woodbine. The last full time Rabbi was Rabbi Titleman in 1966. Fill-in Rabbis would come to Woodbine to conduct High Holiday services. They included Rabbi Seymour Rosen of Margate and Rabbi Atlas of Wildwood. Jews were scattered in areas such as Upper Township, Petersberg, Greenfield township and Beasley Point.

Idie Benjamin was born in a hospital in Atlantic City in 1953. Jewish women in Woodbine in the 1950's delivered their babies by the shore. Her family is related to the Bensons in Woodbine. Some of the family named Benjamin came to Northern New Jersey. While others arrived in Woodbine. Her grandfather, Henry Benjamin was amongst the first group. Later he married a Woodbine girl and the clans were united.

The Talmud Torah had been a weedy lot for a couple of years before Idie was born. This was a new era in Woodbine during the 1950's. Idie grew up on Adam Avenue nearby the big synagogue. During the 1956 Hurricane, the roof of the synagogue was ripped off. This would bring havoc to her house as well. The storm was so bad that her mother couldn't get to Idie's room that night.

Now that the Talmud Torah was gone, some change in the community's education of its young Jewish children were in order. All girls went to Hebrew school by the age of 7 and in the second grade in the 1960's. Three children were in the class! They included Donnie Benson and another girl. Three years before this one class, another bigger class existed.

Little Neil Goldman was her brother's friend. Hebrew school did change. Emphasis was now on how to read Hebrew and the celebration of the Jewish holidays.

Idie's father helped in the building the Sucah in the rear of the synagogue on Washington Street. All Chanukah and Purim services were preceded with plays. The Sucah was made of all green scenery and it was like being in a pine forest to young Idie.

Simhas Torah was the night of the big community party in Woodbine. This was the tradition that was carried down over the generations in Woodbine. Even in the 1950's and 1960's meant that a big table in the synagogue was filled with food and drink. Everyone ate and drank well. Big monstrous Kichel was made by the Liss bakery in Vineland for this activity.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Simhas Torah was the only night that Mrs. Benjamin would allow her children to drink soda water! The children were left by themselves at a table and observed the adults drinking friviously. This was a mixture of joy and not a worry in the world that initiated this behavior. So the children mixed all the different flavors of soda in one glass and drank! There were many children in the community. The Goldman, Kessler, Rabinowitz, Siegel and the Benjamin families all had children.

The Siegels ran a meat business that served the entire community. The last kosher butcher closed on Adam Avenue in the early 1950's. Most Jews in the community lived by the degree of Kashrut that the Siegels delivered. Some people evidently did not go along with eye appeal of the meats alone. Idie's bubbie on her mother's side, Lena Stein questioned the degree of Kashrut of the Kosher butchers after the Second World War. Packaged goods were carried here and since Lean did not see no pin feathers on the chickens, she believed this one place not to be Kosher! Many Jewish farmers were leaving the farms and moving into Woodbine at this time.

Idie's brother was allergic to dairy products. First Mrs. Benjamin would drive him to Atlantic City for a doctor's visit on Saturday. Rabbi Cohen did not like or approve of this action. He would come teach some of the children in their homes. This included Idie on how to read Hebrew.

As for Kashrut in the house, Idie's mom tried to keep a Kosher home. But when Idie's brother was allowed to eat only meat and a couple of vegetables meant that the home was very difficult to control. It was not a matter of economics, either. Idie would drink a glass of milk at the table where here brother ate only meat! In this situation, Mrs. Benjamin refused to keep a Kosher home where everything was confused. Rachel was not comfortable at observing Kashrut incorrectly! Instead of doing it wrong, she didn't do it at all.

For Selicos, a new idea of attracting people to midnight services to usher in the High Holidays was needed in Woodbine in the 1950's. A movie or a talk was tried. For the Holidays, the town was closed in the following businesses. They included the Kessler market, Siegel market, Benson service station, the Capitol movie theatre, Goldman dry cleaning store, Herman Rosenfeld feed store, Jake Rosenfeld T.V. repair shop and Feldman candy store at Washington and Franklin Streets. The factories and the schools were closed, too. Old Woodbiners came back for the High Holiday period and the old homes around town were opened up.

Lake Numie was where the Tashlich service was now conducted by the Rabbi. The new lake was perfect. The congregation would walk several miles to Belle Plain Forest past the Jewish Cemetery to cast away their sins into the deep water of the lake.

On Yom Kippur, the entire family would fast. Idie as a child would bring her brother home so she could feed him. This would allow her mother to stay in shul all day. All the women learned by rote. They knew the service by heart. Shul was a serious matter. Rachel Benjamin felt that her children should receive a better Jewish education that she did as a child. In shul, Idie was not allowed to run around. Being in synagogue was taken seriously due to her mother's beliefs. You were there to learn and to be inspired.

In the 1930's, there was no place and little room for the children at services in the synagogue. This was an orthodox synagogue. There was no junior congregation. In the 1930's, the shul was not a place for children. This was the trend in those days. But the children went to shul anyway. Part of going to shul was running around on the grounds. The shul had a big front lawn with hedges surrounding the small stone wall. This was an enclosed area for the children. The synagogue was located on the main thoroughfare in town and thus was the center for many activities. This was a meeting place for the children on Yontav. Everyone was there. All children would be dressed up and ran around on the grass. As long as they did so within this perimeter of the hedges, it was considered "going to shul".

The fact that the shul was packed for services and that the tall windows were wide open did not matter. The children were having a good time while going to shul. Attending shul was fun for these youngsters and they grew up with that important feeling from an early age. Meanwhile, their parents prayed to Almighty G-d. The noise from the children was no more audible than the people conversing as they prayed in the large sanctuary. There were windows on all sides of the synagogue. Sometimes the weather was cold and then hot in the afternoons. There were two strange elderly ladies who came to the shul only on Yontav in the 1950's according to Idie. One wore a black and sat at one end of the balcony. The other lady wore white and sat at the opposite end of the balcony. The windows were big and heavy and they had to be opened with a long pole with hook on the end of it. All the heat in the synagogue rose to the ceiling or the upstairs. The women generally wore their winter clothes for the High Holidays. You could barely open the windows and suddenly you would hear these elderly women shout "cold-cold" in their broken English. The windows had not yet been opened!

In the 1950's, a junior congregation did form. It was different now in Woodbine. The children came for Sharis or early morning services. When the Torah services was about to begin, the children were excused. This was a new Woodbine by the early 1960's.

When Idie was nine or ten, the Rabbi would teach the children the main prayers for Yontav. Rabbi Cohen instructed the children that if they got lost, that they were to meet the Rabbi on page such and such. The prayer book still in use was mostly in Hebrew and this idea was a safeguard so that the children would not feel left out. If you got lost in the Hebrew reading on page 36, you knew to stop and meet the Rabbi on page 47. This was in keeping with Rabbi Cohen's belief of knowing the beginning and trying to finish a portion.

In the synagogue, the children or the junior congregation were seated in three or four rows between the Aron Kodesh and the Tabah. The Rabbi would stand in front of the Aron Kodesh on the Bima and he would daven in front of the children. His back would face the children. The Rabbi would always face the Aron Kodesh as per orthodox ritual. Very rarely in the 1960's was there a chazzon at services. The Rabbi would only face the congregation to deliver his sermon. Since the 1940's, this was done in English and not in Yiddish.

The girls would sometimes sit with their fathers downstairs. In later years, the assigned seat system disappeared. Even into the 1960's, you didn't dare sit in the elderly ladies seats. As the girls became teenagers, they would sit with their mothers upstairs in the balcony where there was more room. The Rabinowitz women were now more pious that most. You could see the men turning around to whisper upstairs the page numbers so their wives could follow along. No responsive reading took place in English in the early 1960's. No one would announce the page numbers out loud, either!

The Yom Kippur pledges were special. This was called "lets make a deal" by the old timers. Arthur Levy z"l would initiate this process by reciting a story. This was the same story year in and year out. One man would announce out loud, "in honor of my mother, I give \$ 100." Fifteen minutes later there was a second round of these voice pledges. "In honor of my son, I give \$ 25"! There was a sense of competition created in the synagogue. There also pressure to contribute as much as you could afford and even more!

After the men broke the fast of Yom Kippur with their families, the balabitim of the shul would run back to the synagogue and write down the pledges that they recalled. This was synagogue business being conducted. Now what did Mr. Siegel pledge? This was the money for the shul expenses during the course of the year. Some money was sent to the United Jewish Appeal. During these times there was no dues structure in effect.

Yiskor was a sad time in Woodbine by this time. The whole community participated. Many people lived to an old age. But the pioneers of Woodbine were few in number by this time. The adults and even children who had parents living were asked to leave the sanctuary so that the Yiskor services could begin. Idie Benjamin recalls that if her father would catch her sitting in shul during this time, he would surely kill her. Everyone knew that this service was for people who lost a parent. To sit in shul during these services was to dishonor their parents and Idie did not need to be told this twice.

This was an East European tradition that was carried over from the old country. Even though some communities observed an eternal Kaddish for the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, this ritual was not observed in Woodbine. Tradition was observed. Idie's father's father died when he was a teenager. Her father made a point to sit with a young man who came through this time so as to give moral support during this emotional time.

In Woodbine there were never late night services. For Yontav, the men would attend Mincha services after sundown and they would return for the the Erev Yontav meal. This was family time in Woodbine.

Idie was ingrained with values. As a Hillel activist at Brandeis University, she would get the religious services organized. But then she would quickly return home to get the meal ready for the 14 undergraduates who arrived to participate in the Eruv Yontav meal. Kiddush was said in her apartment!

The flip flop in America is for a different crowd or group of Jews. Family and entertainment is important today in order to hear a sermon. Still Idie's belief's and practices are entrenched in her own upbringing in synagogue life. She loved Kabblah Shabbath but she will not bring her young children to shul so they can fall asleep! The family eats and does things together and doesn't leave the home on Friday nights now that she is married.

Late Friday nights services never existed in Woodbine. Orthodox ritual in Woodbine was an extension of Shetle life in Europe. Fifty, sixty, seventy years later the same ritual was in tact and being used in Woodbine. The people of Woodbine were all poor and this meant little education in Jewish law. Learning by rote what your father taught you was all that you needed to have at your side in the Streible.

In the 1950's, people in Woodbine got married at the same time and had children together. As a result, there were clusters of children the same ages similar to the pioneering days of old. This activity was the norm in the early and mid 1950's in Woodbine.

A Bar Mitzvah celebration in Woodbine in the 1950's was a good Kiddush table held inside the Woodbine shul. The full community rejoiced in this life cycle event. There was herring, gelfite fish, kichel, schnappes and wine plus sweets of all kind. The mechitza was a Kosher one. It was the banister at the foot of the balcony upstairs.

Idie's bubbe, Lena Stein had a fight and left the big shul. Lena was too proud to admit that she couldn't climb the steps at the big shul to the balcony anymore. This was her way out and she started to attend the small shul in the late 1930's and early 1940's. At the small shul there was no fancy ordained Rabbi. The men and women did sit apart with a Kosher mechitza to separate the people according to sex.

Up until the early 1950's and the conclusion of Rabbi Benn's stay, there was auctioning of aliyahs at the big shul. Everyone of the young unmarried men in the late 1940's did not have enough money to make a substantial pledge. But they did have money in their pockets. These young men pooled their funds and "won" the aliyah. The aliyah would then go to the highest bidder. Then in turn, these men transferred this Kovad or honor to an older man who couldn't make a contribution to the shul! This was real Jewish community spirit.

On Simhas Torah, the men paraded inside the shul. This was the only time that the women were allowed downstairs from the balcony. Women did not come much to shul in the 1930's and the 1940's. But the children were participants. The women were just spectators and watched the men perform. The women would cater the services with food. Girls were considered children until age 12. Idie would sit with her father downstairs until her mom came with her brother. Then she would leave for the balcony. This was always done with a message between the parents. The women were not part of the services. They came not especially for the Torah reading as much for a certain respectable amount of time.

Streible life meant that women with little children in the 1930's would not come at all. The 1950's brought a change to this environment. After the children were dressed, then the women came to shul much later. Streible life also meant that the men would come to shul and the women took care of the children.

As Idie became a newly married woman it meant that she would relocate to Atlantic City near Linwood. Her family joined the Beth Judah congregation in Ventnor. A new program was started in the synagogue in the 1980's. It is called Torah for Tots. This program came about due to equal rights for women. Children are not allowed to run wild in the synagogue. You want to give them beginning skills. The goals of this program include the restructuring of the Junior Congregation. It ceased to exist years ago. You can not start a new Junior congregation in mid-stream of the synagogue's history.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

This program was not like Woodbine's Junior Congregation of the 1950's. This program would attempt to build a beginning so as to achieve a second Junior Congregation in the future. The resolution of the congregation was to start at ground level and build from there. These tots are welcomed on the bima and the children are in grades first till fourth grades, too. They are part of an abbreviated Sharis service and join in the singing of An Kel Lo Hano and read Ashrei. Giving kids a head start in preparation for a role in synagogue life was unheard of in Idie's mother's days as a youngster. In the 1950's, Rachel would hire non-Jews as baby sitters so she could go to Yiskor services.

In the Benjamin home, Thanksgiving was a Jewish holiday. This was the only time that the whole family said Motzi or the prayer for abundance of food out loud at the table.

Thanksgiving was Woodbine! People had a place in the shul to come and be themselves. This was safe place! Thanksgiving dinners were given by the congregation. American Jewish History was Woodbine in this respect. This meant if the symbol for Thanksgiving would have been a ham then it would never would have been accepted as a holiday by the Jews. Because the symbol was a turkey, Jews could join in the celebration of this important holiday. There were ecumenical services exercised by many synagogue in the 1950's. The theme was that we are all one and together we can share! Jews and non-Jews alike exchanged pulpits by different religious leaders. This was a popular practice but not so in Woodbine.

For Passover, it was completely different for the Jews of Woodbine. This holiday meant work to the women. Since there was no place to buy Kosher provisions, one would fill out an order slip from the shul of supplies for the holidays in the 1950's. The Sunday before Pesach, the orders were shipped into the shul. The men would load up their cars during the 1950's and deliver the goods to the families. One generation before this it was done with horse and wagon. For the synagogue, this distribution of Pesach supplies was a fund raiser for the synagogue. If the women did not order it, she would not get it!

For Passover, Rachel would chase all the children out of the house. Mr. Benjamin would take the children up to Vineland for the day. For Idie, Pesach was receiving a new born chick in her hands. But this was a Christian ritual and only in life did she find this out to be true. Idie's birthday was at this time of the year. It was a tradition for her mom to make a sponge cake and pour strawberries over it plus add some candles to the cake for here birthday.

The sisterhood sponsored the Simhas Torah, Chanukah and Purim parties annually. The women would prepare the food in the kitchen of the synagogue. There was only the synagogue and the sisterhood plus daily services and Yashreit services that attracted the people of Woodbine to the shul in the 1950's.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

There were four girls in the Hebrew class of "Idie Benjamin. This included Dina Rabinowitz and Carol Rosenfeld. This was a combined 5th and 6th grade class. The girls wanted a finally. They went to their mother and she told them to see the Rabbi. The girls did seek out the Rabbi and were "sent home promptly". The girls were seated with the boys but when the girls reached 12 years old they concluded their Hebrew lessons. Idie and the rest of the girls were "thrown out by the Rabbi" The synagogue recognized this fact but it was still under orthodox ritual and would not budge from its principles. Confirmation and mixed seating would never make a dual appearance in Woodbine.

When the girls were done their Jewish life training as a youngster it was complete! Now Idie went to the Atlantic City Friends School. Even though Idie was sent outside of Woodbine to a private school, her Jewish identity went, too! She joined the United Synagogue Youth organization at the request of her mom. This was an arm of the Conservative movement. But Idie was not so willing to join. An agreement was reached with her mom and herself. Idie was allowed to choose whether she wanted to continue U.S.Y or not after her initial meeting. Woodbine kids were approached in their own community by U.S.Y. activists. But the distance to Woodbine was too far on a Sunday night drive.

Most children who went away to college would return to the community for the High Holidays. This was a tradition in the community so they could sit on the same bench with their parents.

In the 1960's, the kids were disciplined by the teacher with a ruler. You could be thrown out of Hebrew school if you misbehaved.

Kids and Israel were never matched up in the early 1960's. At age 12, Idie went to Summer camp. She arrived at camp with a copy of the book of Exodus in her hand. Idie never knew about the modern state of Israel until a few years later in 1965. The teachers in the Woodbine Hebrew School as in most communities failed to educated the young children on the subject of the new modern state of Israel. The orthodox Rabbis were coming to terms as to what the new modern state of Israel means in Modern Jewish historical terms. Especially in light of the new period without the arrival of the Messiah.

Idie Benjamin grew up in a small town in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Woodbine offered the comforts of a generation ago. The post office, bank, movie theatres were all now part of the community as regular features. The town could also boast of two movie theatres and this meant two movies per week appeared here! But these were times of hardship for many Jewish families in this era. There was not even money to hire a babysitter. The answer was to allow her father to watch the children as her mother would walk across the street to see the movie. When he came home, it was Rachel's turn to go. She would go watch the movie while her husband would watch the children on the front porch.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

There was no pizzeria in Woodbine at this time but there was an ice cream parlor! Woodbiners would not eat in other peoples homes by the 1930's due to the distrust of the degree in the practice of Kashrut in the community at that time. People were not following the dietary laws as closely as they did one generation ago.

Americanization in Woodbine did not mean Assimilation! Living in Woodbine and being Jewish was natural. These people had an identity and they were never self-conscious of themselves.

The Jews of Woodbine partied on Simhas Torah as a community event. American orthodox Jews were not truly educated in the early period of the immigration period. Nominal Jewish people who had nothing to lose came to America during that time period. No prosperity and no money but no penniless made for an interesting adjustment to American life. They were full of hope and dreams. Woodbine attracted these Jews who wanted to remain Jews in a free society. They did it the best way they knew how. This meant attaching themselves to the soil and working in the factories but in a country setting. Shabbas meant so much to them even if they didn't fully observe it or understand the laws associated with the Jewish Sabbath. The famous picture of the men partying on Simhas Torah in Woodbine tells us that these men did not adhere to the custom of not allowing their pictures to be taken let alone on a Jewish holiday! But they celebrated the traditions of being a Jew.

Jews who left the Shetle in this fashion during the 1890's went off to learn a trade at age 13. This was normal because they were not good enough at Rabbinics or their parents did not have enough money to send their boys to the Yeshivoths for further study of Judaism.

These Jews arrived and became Jews at the same time. This was tradition and freedom at its best! A generation of free individuals choosing to adhere to their traditions in a foreign land and not completely sure of what traditions actually entailed was enlightening. What these Jews were taught in the old world survived and made it to America in the late 19th and early 20th century. Jewish minded people became active Jews in America due to the freedom America offered free from Pogroms and persecution.

Schools were still closed for the Jewish holidays in Woodbine during the 1960's. Many teachers were Jewish by this time. The only innovation that came to Woodbine in the Jewish community was that its Hebrew school included girls!

But by the first Sabbath after the girls turned 12 years old starting in the 1940's meant that bannished to the balcony upstairs. These families were separated by the mechitza from then on in the religious setting of the synagogue. And as the eyes of the youngsters peered towards upstairs, a sad feeling gripped the whole congregation by the start of the modern period. This was tradition set forth and bounded up in ritual that was started by their grandfathers in the last century.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Woodbine was one of the few places in America at the beginning of the 20th century where religious Jews could come and live as Jews plus observe the Sabbath at the same time.

The 1960's soon gave way to the 1970's. Changes were irreversible. No more new Jewish families were moving into Woodbine. No more Jewish children were growing up in Woodbine in any numbers similar to the 1950's. A Cantor from New York was hired for the High Holidays. Regular morning services had stopped when Rabbi Weisberger was in Woodbine. During the year, only a few Yachreits would be observed in the synagogue. This was the only time the shul was opened on the weekdays. The number of synagogues had long since shrunk to only one in the community. The biggest one remained a beacon of light and hope to the remaining Jews some 80 years later in the community.

It was 1980, when Levish Liebowitz retired to a nursing home that Shabbas services were discontinued. Woodbine became an inactive congregation at this time and was only open for the High Holiday season.

Herman Rosenfeld is the caretaker of the shul and conducts the duties of the once active Chevra Kaddisha by opening up the cemetery a few weeks before the onset of the High Holidays. He conducts the prayers for the dead and family members who come to honor their parents.

The Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue had been out on the National Historic Register in 1981. This is the largest synagogue built entirely by its congregation and their craftsmanship that is still standing today in America.

By 1983, some of the elderly women could not climb the steps no more to the balcony and the congregation agreed to have mixed seating. This meant that men would sit on one side of the aisle and the women sat on the other side of the aisle. The Tabah was the dividing line of the synagogue.

The shul does not smell like a shul anymore. The Shabbas Goi of more than 40 years on the job is still held by Adolph Filackeck. He has done a great job in seeing to the up keep of the shul. He still opens the windows and vents out the big sanctuary. The author was there during the week before the High Holidays and witnessed the opening of the Shul for air. Mr. Filackeck feels that this is not only good for the building but for the "soul" of the shul!

1986 was to have been the last year for services in Woodbine. But in 1988 30 to 35 people observed the new Jewish year in the age old synagogue. Even though no water or heat was available it still was home!

As Woodbine approaches its 100th year in existence, the Baron De Hirsch experiment has been declared a success! The Jewish people who remain are committed to their Jewishness. A long era of public Jewish worship in Woodbine continues!

Reference Source Credits

Taped interview with Mrs Joseph (Shalk) Grossman # 234 4/2 / 1986
Taped interview with Herman Rosenfeld # 269 8/25/1986
Taped interview with Mary (Breslow) Levy # 333 7/14/1988
Taped interview with Flo and Larry Benson # 331 7/13/1988
Taped interview with Idie Benjamin # 335, 336, 337 8/9/1988
Taped interview with Jack Rifkin # 338 8/16/1988

Telephone interview with Dr. Roy Hand June 5th, 1986
Telephone interview with Dan Broder September 19th, 1986
Telephone Interview with Herman Finger September 19th, 1986
Telephone interview with David Feldman October 9th, 1986
Telephone interview with Jack Rubinoff October 9th, 1986
Telephone interview with Zelda (Rabinowitz) Meranze 7/17/1988
Telephone interview with Sam Immerman 8/4/1988
Telephone interview with Mark Singer 8/14/1988
Telephone interview with Moses Siegel 8/25/88

Cape May County Story by George F. Boyer
Courtesy of the Cape May County Library C.M. Court House
Mr. Kleiner's travel reports of Zionist adventures in the
Greater Delaware Valley, Courtesy of Phila Jewish Afchives
Brochure of the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School : 1898
Courtesy of the Cape May County Historical Association
Deeds of Religious institutions in Woodbine
Deed Book 1 pages 204 and 256, Book 3 page 268
Courtesy of the Cape May County House Clerk's office
Archives of the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue
68th Anniversary Booklet : 1961

History of the Baron De Hirsch Fund By Samuel Joseph: 1935
The Russian Jew in America by C. Berheimer
Winston Pub. Co. Phila : 1905
Univerasal Jewish Encyclopedia : 1939
Courtesy of Gratz College of Philadelphia
Excerpts from the English Magazine " The Jewish Farmer"
Inter Library Loan from American Jewish Historical
Society on the Campus at Brandeis University, Waltham Mass
Booklet on Jewish Religious Services for the Boy Scout
Camporees Pub by the Jewish Committee on Scouting in NY no date
The Jews of Philadelphia by Sabato Morais
Published by the Jewish Publication Society : 1894
Consecration Service Booklet of the Woodbine Brotherhood
Synagogue : November 20th, 1896
Courtesy of the Drosie Library, temporarily at
Congregation Adath Israel on the Main Line, Lower Merion, Pa.
Adventures in Idealism by K.Sabsovich : 1922
Memories of Woodbine by David G. Ludin 1891 to 1894
Published in the Jewish Frontier Magazine no date
Courtesy of Idie Benjamin
Immigrants to Freedom By Joseph Brandes
Published by the Jewish Publication Society, Phila. : 1971
Article in the Cape May County Gazette, Cape May County
Court House March 31, 1899
Deed Restrictions of Land Use in Woodbine by the Woodbine
Land Improvement Company in 1943 by Arthur Benjamin
Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America by Uri Hershler