Southern New Jersey SYNAGOGUES

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

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Woodbine, New Jersey was developed as an agricultural colony for newly arriving Russian Jewish immigrants in the early 1890's. A tract of 5200 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 1897. 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 Hazel or good luck to begin their pioneering days. Unlike in Alliance and Carmel, these newly arriving immigrants were expected to put down $120 or 15% of the $800 for each farm. The Fund would arrange a mortgage for the balance. These Jews came with money but were seen penniless!

This colony would be different in many ways 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 it 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. Halferton, Ziontown, Mizpah and Lebanon were examples of Jewish industrial settlements in Southern New Jersey in the early 1890's. However, 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 Jannsonn 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 kapos in the Colony. Reports of the legal agreements for the Colonists were soon to be released.

Up until this time, the Jewish Colonists 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. Ludin. 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 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 was that in no 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 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 Sabsovitch was chosen the superintendant 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 Ovam 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 Sabsovitch had vision. He was not a benefactor of the community but he lived to see his idea implemented in the community unlike Michael Nejirim in Carmel. That Benefactor died before his dream of a prosperous settlement could take hold.

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!
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Some Jewish Colonists ceased operations that left Jewish Colonists as Jewish settlers independently on their own. Most towns and hamlets were examples of the Jewish community's 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.

Individuals left Woodbine just as 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 produce but with no luck. He tried to produce so far away as Millville and traveled there only to be rejected. David return to Woodbine only to find out that the factory workers cannot afford to buy his produce either. So in desperation David left Woodbine and went into the social fabric 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 co-op in 1893. A Benevolent Association was set up first. Agudat Achim Anshei Woodbine was incorporated December 15, 1893. This was done with the help of H.L. Sabovuch. Herman Rosenfeld was chosen President and I.L. Sabovuch was elected its Treasurer with Jacob Feldman as Secretary.

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

As the Chevra Kadishah 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 values and a new language. This book picture, the newly arrived immigrants began to get things done each day by depending on each other. The Benevolent Association formed at this crucial hour of need was a blessing in Woodbine. This was temporarily in effect. A market for the farmer's produce was the key to the success of the Colony.

To help achieve this goal, a school was initiated at the secondary level to resolve this problem. Modern farming ideas were needed in order to succeed. The idea was to start a farm for the advancement of Jewish education 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 school was located outside of Philadelphia. The National Jewish Farm School was founded by Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Philadelphia. Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in 1895. One hundred students attended Sabbath school at the Woodbine Farm School which was sponsored by the Benevolent Association. 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. Hadassah Society was organized for the women. 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 on Saturday and not Sunday as the state law of New Jersey dictated. Jews in the Colonies of bremen and C-LM were fined for opening their stores up on Sundays.

The Jews challenged the idea of separation of Church and State. The authorities relented after it was brought to their attention that nearby Shilo outside of Bridgeton, a Seventh Day Adventist Colony would observe their Sabbath on Sunday. The Shilo Colony was a short distance away from the Rosenhayn Colony. Woodbine would later benefit from this 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. This synagogue was a symbol of hope to all the Jews in the community. The community itself helped to construct the physical building of the synagogue. The men even donated money from a community work project to the total of $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 brickyard 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. 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. 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 Colonists 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 dedication 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.

A total of 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 Reiche, 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 shetel mentality was recreating itself here in America.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

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 was fostered by the Baron de Hirsch Fund which had been set up for 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 who worked on the family owned farms. Production in the factory had to be maintained with outside help. Similar people of Eastern European background were brought into Woodbine with the Baron de Hirsch Fund helping. This idea would help to keep the factories fully productive and at the same time help to break up the Shetel mentality that was forming 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 Romanians, Russian and Galician 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 station 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 immigrants to secure a place in the community. The need for help was to be given to all those in need. The shul, which was 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 barn was converted into a sanatorium for this purpose. This was a dream for people who could not afford the costly treatments that were available.

In 1899, Arthur Reischow, Trustee of the Baron de Hirsch Fund and an 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 called the Woodbine Ball. This Purim Ball was a usual fund raiser for the Reischow and liberal Jewish congregations in Philadelphia. Knesseth Israel and Beth Israel two the 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 Sedar 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.

At 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 700 people lived in the area that had been covered by thick woods. Four factories were in production. Two stores were open and three public schools existed for 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 bath and wash house 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 barn was converted into a sanatorium for this purpose. This was a dream for people who could not afford the costly treatments that were available.

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 look to Europe for their town as did the inhabitants or the Carmel Colony. They were part of Woodbine and they 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 a model in civic government. In 1903, the Woodbine Boro was incorporated. A Jewish mayor was elected in H.L. Sabeswich. More Jewish people arrived in Woodbine from Russia as mob violence grew 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 peddler 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. Isaac Hebrew School was a reality. The Hebrew School would be incorporated on May 23, 1905. Ephraim Tepper was chosen president. The new superintendent of the Colony and later became the Mayor of Woodbine was selected Treasurer and the Secretary was S. S. Scher. Three classes, three teachers and 65 students were made up the religious school. Daily instruction in Judaism was given to these young teachers. This was the similar program which started in Philadelphia under the watchful eye of Rabbi Joseph B. Schwab, who was then known as the Central Synagogue. Similar to Norma, Woodbine organized a Farmers Association in 1905. L. Sapin was elected president of the Farmers Association. Children were a key element in the success of the farmers. Their energies had to be harnessed and productive. As in Norma, a Young Boys Club was founded in 1904 with 30 members and a Girls Club had been organized in 1901 with 85 members.

An 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. Paltz.

The Woodbine synagogue was built in the same year as the great benefactor of 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 Jewish people in H.L. Sabeswich. 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 death of world wide Jewish 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 Jews in his host country was discussed. In Woodbine, it was this very idea that was being put into practice. Being a Jew now meant more than mere persecution.

Jews united in political organizations to further their prestige and position of the Jews worldwide. Praise and pride were key ingredients of this message. Rev. H. Klein and a business man traveled the greater Delaware Valley in search of developing a Zionist organization at the grass roots level. The contract was made in Woodbine with new students at the Baron De Hirsch Agricultural School. Hyman Levine was a newly arrived immigrant in 1907. His goal was to learn agriculture and then leave for Palestine.

In 1907 Hyman invited Rev. H. Klein 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 discuss daily. Lectures spread the news of the power of unity for Jewish ideals 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 old colony. This was the time for 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 according to the old world. 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. Isaac 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 Romania. Different factories still required long hours on Saturday's. This also led to the creation of the second generation. The Balabuci 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 money 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 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 bimah in the center of the synagogue. The Nechitzah 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, Isaac 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 Rev 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 each other Jews in a Religious setting. Daily meals and services were held at the big synagogue in honor of a Yashtzeit in memory 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 like the synagogues in the late 1930'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 Guemilas 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 Guemilas Chesed or Free Loan Society would grow in size 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 run by the Balabim or the leaders of the neighborhoods. This was true in Woodbine, too. Then came along the benevolent societies which numbered three in Woodbine by 1900. 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 1900'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. Abromson helped to start a bank in the 1920's as a culmination of efforts to help Woodburners not to just survive in the woods but to live their dreams.

Up until this time Woodbine was similar to the predominantly 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 membership in Jewish community in Russia pondered the idea of how important it is to pray to God on a daily basis. Did it accomplish any good for the Jews themselves in their homeland? New Jews were free to choose here in America and in Woodbine, New Jersey their degree of Judaism. Why were there daily services in Woodbine for freedom to be a Jew meant only to be a Jew and not a participating Jew in a total Jewish community. In Russia, one did not have a chance 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 B'nai B'rith
and Temple. 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
and 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 or theological community. It was where all who called
themselves Jews came to work and live. Some Jews indeed shed
their beards and dark long coasts 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 synon then
here in Woodbine if they did not keep the Sabbath, Kabbalah
and pray to G-d three times per day. Some Jews brought
with them an appetite for protest of worker's rights in the
factories of Woodbine. These Jews were 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!
The migration of the children in the 1910's 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 Molemites. These
teachers were private instructors of Judaism.
Mr. Dearest was a schoolteacher who started his own minyan and
established the fourth congregation in Woodbine in the
1910's. Mr. Jaffe held this position in the community as
well as being the Shamas of the mid-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 Immigrants would switch to electricity in the 1920's end
their lights out at night. The light did not
come back on until after sun down Saturday night. But for
some people this did not want to be hypocritical and did not
keep the Sabbath Jews in their own way. Jews did
not want to deny their children a Jewish education if only
on a lesser scale and the Molemites provided this opportunity.

The Molemites were experts in the oral tradition. Lessons
were taught in Yiddish. The sessions were conducted as if
the Immigrants were 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 family was a local business of many immigrants in the
Jewish Community throughout Southern New Jersey during this
time. This condition was more deadly than Communism.
Samuel's wife and Zaride Jacob raised the children and had
them prepared for their Bar Mitzvahs.

New arrivals, 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 on to 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
good for. But come Yomtov, 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 passed 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 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
plan called for enlarged seating area. The main floor would be
divided into three sections. On the blueprint each section
was identified by a Hebrew letter.

On the far right side of the shul, Aleph section
encumbered 77 seats as did Gimmel 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 Ba'alit or the
officers of the synagogue.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

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.

The full three sided balcony with the Mochitza was 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 Rosh Hashanah. The women stayed home to watch the children.

But things were changing. Young children were kept at home and the baby sitters were hired out with men and women could attend prayer services at the synagogue at the same time in Woodbine in the 1910s. As the protest over worker rights erupted into strikes at the factories in Woodbine in the 1910s, 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 everywhere. The next generation of immigrants children were beginning to take their place. These youngsters were growing up and getting on their own.

They engaged in commerce and retailing. These people left for a trouble-free Jewish environment in Wildwood, Salem and Pennsauken. The Jewish community in Wildwood was attached to the Woodbine community through family ties. The Wildwood Jewish community were the Woodbine community which included the M遵循aa Cemetery as a result of a change. The idea of freedom of enterprise in Wildwood coupled with religious freedom made many small Southern New Jersey towns attractive to new Jewish shopkeepers.

Salem and Pennsauken all developed their minyons due to the beginning of many small enterprises in those communities in the 1910s and 1920s.

Jack Rifkin's dad was born in Russia and raised by an uncle in Bessarabia. Jack's other uncle had a grocery store in Brooklyn and helped to sponsor passage for the family. In 1909, 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 wheelchair around very far! Harry asked why not? The mosquitoes are so populous you have 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.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

Raw milk was considered as the carrier of many diseases 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 York. 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. 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 AM. 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 siege due to 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 Rifkin's wife, Eileen Gurewitz moved to town and initially ran 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.

Jack was in his teens when he was a young and Jack grew up. In Woodbine, there were five kosher butchers in the late 1910s. They included two Singers, 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 Rifkin believed in the Republicans and Democrats. This idea helped to foster two synagogues in Woodbine in the early days. A third one existed on the grounds of the "Colony" or the Baron Dezhoff School. By the 1910s, 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 from the South 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 against the lack of space 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 3,000 people lived in Woodbine. There were 6 or 7 clothing stores in town. Two movie houses, a cleaner's, 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 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. On Shabbas Saturday night, Woodbine was alive! You could buy anything from shoes to shoes 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 Melameden in Rebbetz in Baer on the 7. Goldberg was the usual ritual. Being a Jew and Jewish was 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 turned a marching band in the late 1920'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 1920's, the pioneers thought that if this activity would continue, that the government would ask the boys to join the United States Army. The pioneers left Russia for America in every sense. 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 met in the Talmud Torah next to the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue.

Fundraisers 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. 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. Upon 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 small village in Europe. On Friday afternoons, the town would close down and observe the Sabbath. Rabbi Taishoff died in 1932 before his daughter was born. 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 middle 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 had 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 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 librated 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 ideas and principles. He refused to become a foreman because he would have to report on people 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 Brit 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 Brit 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-observant Jew, in Woodbine in the late 1910s meant applying his knowledge to his daily life. Zionism brought him to America so he could escape the czar’s army.

By the 1920s, his daughter was very active in the community. The public school took most of her time as a girl, only ten or eleven years old. There were 20 to 25 students in her class. Some 90% of them were Jews. In the mid-1920s, 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 Chautauqua Society challenged this conception on the actual grounds of the Jewish Agricultural School. This lessoning 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 Wilmingon or Vineland. No Conservative synagogue was going to supplant people who cling to their orthodoxy in Woodbine.

This hope and desire for modernization spilling over into the religious activities of Woodbine was not a closed cause 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 1920s. Not so in Woodbine! The recent influx of new immigrants to Woodbine in the late 1910s insured that Yiddish would remain the language of instruction within the Talmud Torah. But there was something missing as Woodbine went into the 1920s. 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 were religiously inclined and did not like the attempts of the 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 raised 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 in Woodbine. Philadelphia’s section known Marshall and Girard. A pluralistic Jewish community was not going to be created in Woodbine.

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. N.R. 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 diverse. Some people regardless of their upbringing were invited to participate in these activities. Some Polish farmers and shop owners sent their children there. 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 Yuroch was common at meal time. Pot roast was very rare and a penny was a Placka.

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 activities 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 lessen.
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 strikes 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 came 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 $5,000 annually was needed to help maintain this operation. Mr. Mortimer Schiff, a communal leader proposed this action. The experiment lasted one and a half years. Samuel Fleischer 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 Fleischer'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 Orchestras participated in this program. This was a new direction for an old town. Professor L. H. Horovitz of the Vineland art school helped to promote this idea of culture earlier in that community. Literature and athletics were added to the program of the center. Well known names like Frederick Nunn taught Art. Charles Frohman who was the director of physical culture at Temple University Philadelphia was joined by Alice Kraft as a teacher of dancing. More space was needed. 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.

Siegel was born in Woodbine in 1914. His father, Abraham came to Woodbine in the 1850's. Abraham and Fannie were born Mary, Eva and Moses. Abraham Sigel would gain employment in the Rabinowitz hat factory. In the 1910's he would come to Woodbine and the factory workers would socialize there.

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 be a Jewish community and provide kosher meats to the people of Woodbine.

The 1920's brought more change to Woodbine. The Israels 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) Herzan. The Ladies Aid Society was active in this period. The society was an arm of the Jewish community. Poor people who passed through Woodbine in the 1920's were provided services. Free burial were part of this community's social organizations' service. Zelda's son was an active member as well as her aunt. People who had a solid commitment would follow their parents involvement in the community. Zelda was a tradition that would not be separated from Zelda's son or Aunt Rabinowitz's life. By 1920, the trip across the Atlantic Ocean. The many passages 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 to leave was a regular activity. When her son 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 change her birthday into another name to fool the angel of death. This belief was real and occurred similar to this in Woodbine. Aunt Alta was married to Rabbi Joshua Kahn. The Rabbi would come to live in Woodbine as a result of this marriage.

The Chanukah menorah played a great part in the new immigrants life even though 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 one deal with the many tragedies that befell the Jewish people in the Shetland Islands. Misery, hardship and death followed the Jews to America too. To fool the Devil (Jewish) meant to burn the nail clippings and hair combing. 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. Shabbat 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 Kahn brought this custom over from Europe with him when he arrived. But you didn't have to be a Rabbi to do this action.
During the 1910's, the movie theaters were not open in town on the Sabbath. This was a favorite social place come Saturday night. The day or 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 Shabbos. Rabinowitz's cafe 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 heads covered on the streets of Woodbine. Many wore scarfs or wigs as per Jewish custom. This was a symbol of modesty in daily life. 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 Shiva or Batehach 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 Shiva into a mikveh. This was a tradition in Woodbine since the 1890's. Family purity was an issue and was well known and practiced in Woodbine.

The Kehila bathouse was maintained by both women and men. Who was it? The back was used by the Chevra Kaddisha and was kept nearby the bathhouse as a warning to those that might not think that this was true in modern times.

Yomtov and Shabbos were special times in Woodbine. This was a completely Jewish community like the Shetland of Europe. Traditions was the law of the village. This was Woodbine's heritage for two generations. You could taste Yomtov 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 to season the fish and the meal would make the air in a welcoming spiritual way for these special days.

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 Fatinik 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 Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was situated in the middle of the sanctuary. This was the time in which Mr. Zussman who was a poor-poor Shoebet 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 throughout 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 law. In Woodbine, an Arvut or imaginary fence around the community existed. This would allow Jews to go about their business and not contain themselves. The people who were very religious, even uncomfortable allowing this idea to take place in their minds. Those pious Jews continued to use a handkerchief to cover their arm. The farmers who lived out in the wilderness would follow this tradition especially when it rained. They wore high galoshes to synagogue. When they arrived at the shul, they would ascend the last flight of steps leading up to the sanctuary. At the door to the Ark, the men would remove their galoshes and allow them to dry. The galoshes were left sitting outside the Ark 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 and invitation of a stranger to eat a Shabbatik and family was all that the first and second generation of Children 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 others 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 the 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 History and Observance, Jewish History and Observation of Jewish Holidays. The language of instruction was done in Yiddish. Plays were conducted before the pilgrimage holidays of Shroech, Passover and Shavuot.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

The big synagogue would be refurbished in the mid-1910s. The advent of a kitchen facility would have to wait another decade before being installed. The Chazan found in Woodbine was an added delight. He was the Tankel Rosenthal 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 facilities was being decided. The Shana of the Woodbine Synagogue was found in Mr. Joffe. He was also taught at the school. In addition he was a teacher and taught in the Talmud Torah. The Talmud Torah was open to all who wanted to learn whether it could afford to pay tuition or not. Being Jewish was not a 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 pace was not set out and the fast students couldn't run 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 Shana of the shul, Mr. Joffe conducted Susah Services in the congregational member's homes. With Luba and Estre in hand, Mr. Joffe would come to Zelda'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 Susah as a tradition between Zelda's interest.

In shul, this was the time of seeing the Enabah, the Annual High Holy Days and long trails. 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 community. The Jews who had left England to come to Woodbine did so to escape her Majesty's Royal Armed Forces. Mr. Goodman was a neighbor of the Rabbinowitz family and at shul he would wear this attire on Yom Kippur.

Come Simcha 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 Torah. The schools were all closed for the Jewish holidays long before the Philadelphia public schools honored the Jew's values. The Jews who left England to come to Woodbine did so to escape her Majesty's Royal Armed Forces. Mr. Goodman was a neighbor of the Rabbinowitz family and at shul he would wear this attire on Yom Kippur.

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Flora Benson's father and mother came to America in the 1890s. They were married here in America. Her mom was from Brooklyn. They arrived in America at an early age. Flora was born in New York City in 1893 at 930 Cherry Street. She was the oldest of six children. The family moved to Brooklyn by the turn of the century. Flora would occupy her time as a cashier at a small department store until she became married.

Though mutual friends Flora 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. Jack'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 father's 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 home! Flora thought immediately that she would just love this new way of life. This was "enchanting" 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 or furniture?" She took the furniture!

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 was an original Baron De Hirsch Home.

Jacob and Flora lived on Parkway 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 repaced every so often to burn longer. They looked like electric lights.

Jacob would make his own electricity. He bought a Delco System. These were big glass batteries that powered the 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.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

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 Benson would switch to electricity, but the family had to buy an electric stove as a pre-condition. Flo used gasoline or the white lead type for cooking up until this time. She used it for a long time until the gas was discovered. 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 to Benjamin. Jacob's grandfather adopted this name of Benson for himself. He was a carpenter and actually helped to build the brick shire 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 Jewish congregation in the later years as it was formed. The actual shul developed later. This led to a need for kitchen facilities inside the shul. This would take effect in the late 1920's. The shul was formed in 1920. Chabad and Chasidim plus other Jewish traditions. The women were not allowed to bake those items in their own home if they intended to use these items at a religious ceremony. The shul in the Jewish community was in need of facilities. Rabbi Talshoff arrived in the late 1920's in Woodbine.

At home Flo was a good cook and baked like an average homemaker. She made Gefilte fish for every Friday night. The fish peddler sold fish every day. The fish were caught in the Atlantic Ocean. Chicken soup and fresh vegetables were a common dish. She always offered a nice table. The table was always set. Tzimmes or carrots and raisins and knishes were present. Desserts were a common dish every Friday night too.

Of course there were the yeast cakes. On a daily basis, Flo made cake. Corn muffins were ready for breakfast daily. The table was always set. 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 a change, she would make it herself. Flo did not want it to be sweet and pastry-like. So Flo made the bread.

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.

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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 meats, she continued to buy kosher meats. Veal and brisket were popular items on their table. She would stuff the veal with breadings. Heart and Lung bones were also used! This was a dish called Plum Tzimmes. Stuffed necks or Haluske included chicken fat, onions, and flour. She made potato knishes and she added this to prepared goods store. It was very good!

Jacob had a garden and vegetables and fruits to the hotels in Atlantic City. In return, he would buy in bulk quantities. 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 compost with bananas!

Religious observance in this household would not completely follow the preceding generation. Jacob's parents were Shomer Shabbos Jews. This was done on the farm before the World War. Morning prayers were said in this farm house in the morning at 6 a.m. with all present.

Now Flora would not cook on Shabbos. Although she was not religious. For Passover, 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 the late 1890's and early 1900's.

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

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

Rabbi Shalom Feldman of the hat factories was the Shochet of choice. The hats 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 this would happen in the town.

Jewish life in Woodbine would cater to Judaism in various ways. The Woodbine Basketball team 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!
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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's life style. By comparison, Allen Meyerowitz's Great Grandfather would top this enormous achievement. Max W. Meyerowitz was out to sell 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 unsurpassed. Larry's brother lived on the farm. He bought a butcher shop in Woodbine. He had two liews after his father died in 1969. It was a gentlemen's farm but he stayed here until he passed away in 1980.

The reason for this change can be measured in variety of ways. Larry graduated high school in 1948. 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 the 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 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 force for this town for the 1930s. 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 1930s.

Jewish life in Woodbine in the 1980s. 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 Rejia and her mother hailed from Poland. Both arrived in America in 1939.

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, 1899. The synagogue was not ready then.

On Yomtov, the 2/3 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 1970s and 1980s. Flora would sit with her neighbors and friends. This included Mrs. Fien, Mrs. 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 her mitzvah would pass by swiftly for Larry Benson. The Talmud Torah had a game room where all the children were gathered before class. This was a popular place to meet one's friends. But Larry had his lessons from the Rebbe. Mr. Zoss who was the Shamas. Reb. Zoss would teach him Chumash or Bible. In the 1930s 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 students per class were grouped together according to their abilities. Daily classes and Sunday School were in session but no Sabbath School existed here. Rabbi Ben was here by the time Larry would become a Bar Mitzvah. Rabbi Ben was a modern man and he did not grow a beard. The-bina 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.

Tishlich was observed in the community by all the congregations. That was done at the Belle Plain Forest. The Congregation of the Woodbine Brotherhood was 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 1920s was soon played by the ones. The whole community was involved in the community. Women and family. Family was all-important in the community.

The yellow shul was fortunate in having a men to conduct its services. Leadership would be found in the Sokchet, Mr. Golde. People who lived in the Northern side of the Woodbine railroad tracks generally belonged to the yellow or small shul. The two synagogues had two cemeteries, a men's and a men's. 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 their was no more need for the clothing factories in Woodbine due to the lack of new 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 to farm. A movement to besiege the Southern New Jersey area grew and developed before the outbreak of the War. The new comers as they were called numbered 10 to 20 families of German origin in the countryside near Woodbine. They included the Golestin's, Goldbergs', Schvab's, Goltz's, Gross, Maxmum's, Wolf and the Gris'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.
Mary's parents met in the typical fashion for Woodbine Jews. 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 Breslow lived in Woodbine too. The family lived on the Northern side of the Railroad tracks. This was on 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 Shabbos.

Running water in Woodbine at this time was unheard of inside the homes!

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, 1896. 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 Breeslows moved house, it 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 10 to 20 miles away. The Breeslows 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 on one Thanksgiving, the cat slipped out of the bag. Dorothy remarked to her husband, pick about having a difficult time holding a turkey.

Everyone asked her how come? Dorothy went on to explain about her trip 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 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 Matzo and instructions on how to prepare fried Matzo! 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 ensure that the ladies had their own fish ready for Yomtov. 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 were like the community's age. Ida would have to travel to Atlantic City to get her fish for the holidays. This would include white fish, mullus 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 on 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 "Shaknoor" was brought out for use. This was a pestle. It was used for the Horatceaz or the bitter herbs to be pulverized. It was also used to grind the ginger and cinnamon too. This pestle 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 Sanvour and make tea for her! He would bake a flanberry 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. Pecan was a winter delight for many Jews in Woodbine. Barnett would add the special touch of flavor to this dish that everyone 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 soaked the Jewish soul on a cold winter day. This was the Jewish soul on a cold winter day. For Vountav, Talach was made. This was dough cooked in honey. It was bread, and it was the best. 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 knishes bread. This was a cookie dough cut into strips and covered with a cocoa mixture. A marshmallow was created as it was stirred. These delights were all served. So there 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.

Perogans was another favorite in this family. This Jewish delicacy was home made. All the women in Woodbine would go to the Kosher Butchers shop looking for the hearts with large parts. The first women who came, got this bounty first. Ida would toast the heart with the knife with a lot of onion. 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 is the secret of its flavor.

For Vountav, Ida would make her own noodles and lacen. Ida made three kinds. She would make cut farfel into little squares. Ida made a broad noodle for the soup and a finer noodle for her kugel. For a wedding present, she received a long paring knife and a wash basket from Mr. Bayard. This was Barnett’s boss. This was generous in Woodbine.

Barley potato soup was common in the Breslau house and would often be cooked with meat soup bones.

The Vountav meal would start with chicken soup and lacen. Tzimmes made of carrots and sweet potatoes and some fine pieces of meat were served at the table. Wine for the Kaddish was set out on the table. Barnett had his own vine. He bought his own grapes. A friend of the family made soda water in Woodbine. Barnett bought a glass jug for him for this purpose. He would add some pure alcohol to the jug. The jug had a little neck to it. When the heavy season came along, the new berries would be added to the brew.

Gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries and berries plus huckleberries were mixed in for flavor. And when the hardwood 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 Yashneit to observe in the shul, he would bring a fifth of this wine and a honey cake to synagogue.

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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 from the fens to do it. A man named Mr. Becker wanted a glass of his wine. But Barnett warned him that it was not to be drunk by a big minyan that attended synagogue at Agudas Achim. Still, until the eleventh man came to the shul, they did not start to daven. Woodbine people believed in superstition. This would carry over in America, even in religious life. For Barnett, it was the life blood of the Jewish soul. This kept the David and the Lecha Dodi 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 holydays was slow but sure. The days would grow longer and finally the men returned home from the factories. After dinner, the stoves were cleaned. The sweet potatoes were put in the coals of the wood stoves to cook. By the afternoon, Mary would deliver the sweet potatoes to the girls at the Markowitz 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 she had all the children gone. Ida replied, “You are reading, so read!” He quit this practice and made dinner time for his family.

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

The Talmei 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 near to the shul and watched over it. In the 1930s, there were no Cantors at the synagogue. This time period would give way to the late 1930s. Fully ordained Rabbin was elected to lead this congregation.

Rabbi Harold Lasker stayed here from 1938 until 1939. Rabbi Alper 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 ma'amor for his Bar Mitzvah. Arthur Levy grew up in South Philadelphia and attended the Furness School near 15th and Mifflin Streets. His parents left Philadelphia for health reasons. Their children studied in Woodbine. The Goldberg's were instrumental in running the shul. The little shul did not have its own cemetery.

The Woodbine Badei School 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 Cohen and Barnett Breslow were interested in the Talmud Torah. These men went around to collect money at the factories, "that this is the 1940's so that the children of Woodbine could receive a Jewish education.

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 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 the way 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 a thing of the past. Within ten short years, there were more children growing up in Woodbine as in years past. Mrs. Ellin Goodman taught music and kindergarten. A sisterhood choir was formed with the inclusion of Mrs. Seymour Benson, Mrs. Lottie Benjam, Mrs. Jules Goldfarb, Mrs. Sol Linowitz, Mrs. Arthur Levy, Mrs. Jacob Benson, Mrs. Jacob Siegel, Mrs. Robert Oberfer, Mrs. Herman Singer, Mrs. David Stein and Mr. Arthur Kessler.

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Mary's best friend in FIO Benson was the best singer in the group.

A great sense of community existed in the Jewish people of Woodbine. No one was left out of the fun. Everyone was welcomed at the affairs of the shul. The sisterhood ran dances and made dinners. They charged reasonably priced tickets for $1 each a couple during the 1950's. The money went to the United Jewish Appeal. The women went door to door to collect for the USY 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 Jewish 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 for all the organization. Hazer, the Mother Superior had to step in to solve a crisis in Woodbine at this time. She was from Seaside 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 Polish Catholic families in America was still thirty years away. This episode was brought to the attention of Mother Hazer. She presented this action. She announced to the Polish Catholic Community 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. Several 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. Robinowitz who owned the hat factory insisted that all the children should wear hats. Especially in synagogue. Mr. Robinowitz was a very jolly person and yet trying to be Jewish! As he pared with the Torah during this sacred holiday he would say to the woman, "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.

Jewish 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 schochet would give his students. Barnett was licenced and horrified at this development. For not only did he help to support the Talmud Torah but he was involved in other ways in the life of 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.
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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 resolution made up his mind to leave town.

Rev. Goldberg of the Tifereth 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 Sukas, the older men were served wine and whiskey in the vestry room of the big synagogue. Some items never changed. Egg kulek and honey cake assisted the celebration. Vashilech was conducted as in the past on the road past the cemetery on the way to the Belle Plain Cemetery 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 used Koser meat for its preparation. Jack Siegel had a butcher in the early 1930's and many of the 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 recalled that when the Gentiles came 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 so good that "It was can't do" so they could be because there was no sugar in all the recipe.

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

First the Polish butchers that Mary used, tried some. They were curious. An extra meatball and plenty of sauce was put in 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!

"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 to be duplicated.

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Passover was one of the times in the synagogue when visors 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, Shabbos or parading with the Torah was a tradition of the past, flags on Shabbos was practiced meant that new traditions were practiced. Initially, the pioneers did okay by themselves. Now with a mixture of population and passing of time led to the Shabbos in Woodbine. The shul in finding his replacement. The synagogue's Shabbos fell 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 Fischbeck's family was amongst this influx. Adolph as a young child would be given candy for lighting the German's stove before and after the Sabbath. Rev. Zess, the Shabbos at the big shul asked little Adolph if he would assist him in his chores. This was okay by his parents. This would turn out to be a lifetime task.

This was the 1930's and the Woodbiners would see a change in the 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 a new group. The community did not see these Jews until after the time to exterminate the Jews was in high gear in Europe.

It was the time in 1932 when Herman Rosenfeld went into the fur business. The refugees would find 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 could not do. In the early 1930's, a dozen foreign families out of 15 new arrivals joined the big synagogue. These people purchased 15 acres of land and were religiously observant to some extent. These people were known very well of their Judaism even if they did not practice it fully in Germany.

The three agricultural holidays in the Jewish calendar which included Sukas, 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 Talshoff had died in the 1930's and a leader was not immediately hired during the Depression. The German Jews helped to put the Sukah 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 1929, Woodbine would have its formal Rabbi in 50 years.

As time passed, participation 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.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

For Thanksgiving, the sisterhood conducted a dinner. This would include 6 large turkeys that were slaughtered kosher. The turkeys were stuffed and served to 100 people in the late 1950's. This was the time of the Scumptions service to the Jewish community through the synagogue. 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 to pay for this 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 advertised 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 Mayer. Refreshments were served. The social was a fund raiser for the synagogue.

The Levy's stayed in Woodbine for a long period of time. This included the passing of parents and the natural aging of their children. In the 1980's, Arthur Levy passed away and today at age 30, Mary Levy has left Woodbine to live in Vineland. Fitting into a newly adapted Jewish community is not easy; however, 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 Sephardic. For Herman has the Hebrew name of Zachy. Herman's Hebrew name would be Zayde. This young boy would be named for two relatives. The other one being Harris Jeffes 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 1940'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 congregants at the Woodbine Brotherhood synagogue.

Piddishnikel was Woodbine at this time. For Passover, you could hear the girls playing the nuss game and smell the fish cooking throughout the whole town. This smell was not to be found in the countryside by the arrival of the First World War. Woodbine would be celebrating some thirty years of existence by now. When darkness settled on 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 westerly room. The Ladies Auxiliary would call all Jewish families in the 1920's for their matzoh orders.
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 born down in 1952. The little synagogue closed in 1956. Their cemetery is located near the big house. The change that occurred after the conclusion of the Second World War was not relevant to the Jewish community. Rabbi Seigl’s Kosher Butcher shop closed in 1957. Urban change, movement of Jews to the cities such as Philadelphia, made Woodbine a place to go for Rabis to gain some communal experience and then move onto a greater challenge. Rabbi Cohen and Rabbi Kramer followed and they were the last Rabis with children to stay in Woodbine. The last full time Rabbi was Rabbi Tishelman in 1965. 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, Point Pleasant, Greenwich township and Manasquan Point.

Ida Benjamin was born in a hospital in Atlantic City in 1953. Jewish women in Woodbine in the 1960’s labored in stores by the shore. Her family is located in Woodbine. Some of the family named Benjamin came to Northern New Jersey. While others arrived in Woodbine. Her grandmother, Helen Benjamin was amongst the first group. Later he married a Woodbine girl and they remained in the house. The Talmud Torah had been a wacky lot for a couple of years before Ida was born. This was a new era in Woodbine during the 1950’s. Ida grew up on Adam Avenue during the 1950’s. 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 Ida’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. Ida 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.

Ida was born in the building the Synagogue in the 1950’s. Three children were in the class. They included Donnie Benson and another girl.

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.

A family home in the building the Synagogue in the 1950’s. The Synagogue was made of all green scenery and it was like being in a pine forest to young Ida.

Sohnah Torah was the night of the big community party in Woodbine. This was the tradition that was carried onto over the generations in Woodbine. Even in the 1950’s and 1960’s means that a high table in the synagogue was filled with food and drink for everyone ate and drank well. Big monstrous kiddush was made by the Lisa bakery in Vineland for this activity.
Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

On Yom Kippur, the entire family would fast. Idle 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, Idle 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 Yom Tov. Everyone was there. All children would be dressed up and run around on the grounds. As long as they did so within this perimeter of the hedges, it was considered "going to shul".

They saw 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 Yom Tov in the 1950's according to Idle. One wore a black and the other one a white dress and they sat at 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 Shabbat or early morning services. When the Yom Tov services were about to begin, the children were excused. This was a new Woodbine by the early 1960's.

When Idle was nine or ten, the Rabbi would teach the children the main prayers for Yom Tov. Rabbi Cohen instructed the children that if they got lost, that they were to meet the Rabbi on page 36. The prayer book was 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 were seated in three or four rows between the Aron Kodesh and the Torah. 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 custom. Very rarely in the 1960's, there was a chazzan at services. The Rabbi would often lead the congregation to deliver his sermon. Since the 1960's, this was done in English and not in Yiddish.

The girls would sometimes sit with their fathers downstairs. In later years, the family chazzan disappeared. Even into the 1960's, you didn't dare sit in the balcony. The children became teenagers, they would sit with their mothers upstairs in the balcony where there was more room. The Rabinowitz women were more places that most. You could see the men burning around on the second floor. The pages numbers 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 "let's make a deal" by the old timers. Arthur Lott 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 $10." 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 man broke the fast of Yom Kippur with their families, the barmitzvah 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 those 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 poinsettia 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 tells 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 external Kaddish for the 5 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. She had 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 Yomtov, the men would attend Minchah services after sundown and they would return for the Erev Yomtov meal. This was family time in Woodbine.

Idie is ingrained with values. As a Biale activist at Brandeis University, she would get the religious services organized. And then she would quietly return home to get the meal ready for the 14 undergraduates who arrived to participate in the Erev Yomtov meal. Kaddish was said in her apartment.

The Kaddish, if done 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 beliefs and practices are entrenched in her own upbringing in synagogue life. She loved Kabbalah Shabbath but she will not bring her young children to shul so they can fall asleep! The family eats and does things together and don't leave the home on Friday nights now that she is married.

Late Friday nights never existed in Woodbine. Orthodox ritual in Woodbine was an extension of Shetel 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 streichlo.

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.

Woodbine's Jewish Congregations

A Bar Mitzvah celebration in Woodbine in the 1950's was a good Kaddish made inside the Woodbine shul. The full community rejoiced in this life cycle event. There was horsing, quizzing, fish, liquor, schnapps and wine plus sweets of all kinds. The mezzuzah was a kosher one. It was the hanukiah at the foot of the balcony stairs.

Idie's husband, Lena Steins had a flight and left the big shul. Lena was too proud to admit that she couldn't climb the stairs at the big shul to the balcony anymore. This was her way out and she started to attend the earlier Kaddish 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 mezzuzah to separate the men and women according to sex.

Up until the early 1950's and the conclusion of Rabbi Renn's stay, there was auctioning of all types 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 alligah 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 alligah at the big shul.

On Simchas Torah, the men paraded inside the shul. This was the only time that the women were allowed outdoors 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 not extra observers and watched the men perform. The women would enter the services with food. Girls would consider 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.

Streiklo 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 and ready, then the women came to shul much later. Streiklo life also meant that the men would come to shul and the women took care of the children.

As Idie became a newly married would mean 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 1950's. It is called Torah for Toddlers. This program came about due to equal rights for women. Children are not allowed to run wild in the synagogue. You want to give then beginning skills. The goals of this program include the restructurings 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 1950s. 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 boys are focused on the bima and the children in grades first through fourth, too. They are part of an abbreviated Shabbat service and join in the singing of An Kid Lo Rabi and read Ashrei. Giving kids a head start in preparation for a role in synagogue life was unheard of in Idie's mother's day from kosher. 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 Horesi 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 was a ham then it 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 semi-synagogues by many synagogues in the 1950's. The theme was that we are all one and together we can share! Jews and non-Jews alike exchanged holidays 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 the 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 first time, this distribution of Pesach supplies was a fund raiser for the synagogue. If the women did not order it, they would not get it!

For Passover, Rachel would chase all the children out of the house. Mr. Benjamin would take the children up to Vineyard 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. Rachel's birthday was this time of the year. It was a tradition for her son to make a sponge cake and pour strawberries over it plus add some candles to the cake for her birthday. The sisterhood sponsored the Simchas Torah, Chanukah and Purim. Moreover, there were at least one lady who would prepare the food in the kitchen of the synagogue. There was only the synagogue and the sisterhood plus daily Arvut services that attracted the people of Woodbine to the shul in the 1950's.

There were four girls in the Hebrew class of Idie Burnet. This included Dina Robinowitz and Carol Rosenfeld. This was a combined 5th and 6th grade class. The girls wanted a finally version of their mother and she told them to see the Rabbi. The girls did seem to get the Rabbi and were sent home promptly. The girls were excited with the idea of being Jewish. They were given a set of Hebrew lessons. Idie and the rest of the girls were "but it was still under orthodox ritual and never a question of Jewish principles. Confirmation and mixed seating would never make itly appearance in Woodbine."

When the girls were done their Jewish life training as a younger, it was complete! Now Idie went to the Atlantic City Yeshiva School. Even though Idie was sent outside of Woodbine to a private school, her Jewish identity went too. She joined the United Synagogue Youth organisation at the request of her mother. This was an arm of the Conservative movement. But Idie was not so willing to join. An agreement was reached with her mother 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 is a tradition in the community so they could sit on the same bench with their parents.

In the 1950'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. She never knew about the modern state of Israel until a year later in 1965. The teachers in the Woodbine Hebrew School were the subject of the new modern state of Israel. The orthodox Jews were coming to terms as to whether the new modern state of Israel was the same as the Jewish historical state. 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 comforting atmosphere of a generation ago. The post office, bank, movie theater and all the places of community as regular features. The town could also boast of a movie theater and this meant two movies per week appeared here! But those were times of hardship for many Jewish families in this era. There was not time to hire a babysitter. The answer was to allow her father to watch the kids as her mother would walk across the street to see the movie. When they 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! Woodburbers would not eat in other places by the 1930's due to the distrust of the degree in the practice of Keshrut 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 parted 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 penitence 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 did not 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 customs of not allowing their pictures to be taken on a Jewish holiday! But they celebrated the traditions of being a Jew.

Jews who left the Shetland 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 Yeshivot for further study of Judaism.

These Jews arrived in America at the same time. This was a transition and freedom of the Jews. 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 minds became active Jews in America due to the freedom America offered 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 Shabbat after the girl married 12 years old starting in the 1940's meant to banish to the balcony upstairs. These families were separated by the mezzah from then on in the religious setting of the synagogue. And as the eyes of the young people grew to the uppersat and were gripped the whole congregation by the start of the modern period. This was tradition set forth and bound up in ritual that was started by their grandfathers in the last century.

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 observed the Sabbath at the same time. The 1960's soon gave way to the 1970's. Changes were irreversible. No more Jewish families were moving into Woodbine. No more Jewish children were growing up in Woodbine in any numbers similar to the 1960's. A Contractor from New York was hired for the High Holidays. Regular morning services stopped when Rabbi Weisberger was in Woodbine. During the years, only a few Yeshivot 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 30 years later in the community.

It was 1960, when Leibowicz 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 Kadishiyah by opening up the cemetery a few weeks before the onset of the High Holydays. He conducts the prayers for the dead and family members who come to honor their parents.

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

By 1983, none of the elderly women could climb the steps any 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 on the other side of the aisle. The position was the dividing line of the synagogue.

The shul does not change like the Shabbas. The Shabbas is still held on the High Holydays and witnessed the opening of the Shul for the first time. Mr. Flicker feels that this is not only good for the building bus for the "soul" of the shul! 1986 was to have been the last year for services in Woodbine. But in 1988 25 to 35 people observed the new Jewish year in the 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!
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