

Southern New Jersey  
**SYNAGOGUES**

A SOCIAL HISTORY

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

Written By  
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## Ziontown

Ziontown was a Hebrew settlement founded in Gloucester County in the early 1890's. Located in Franklin Township and four miles South East of Malaga was the start of Zion. The town was projected by a New York cloak manufacturer and Jacob M. Applebaum of Philadelphia. They purchased 1137 acres of bushland from the Gloucester County Land and Improvement Company in 1891. They mortgaged the purchased through the Woodbury Real Estate Mutual Loan Association.

Jacob Zion, Simon Gerson and Abraham Greenfeld of the Jewish Colony in Rosenhayn bought the land near Malaga on June 1st, 1891. Five hundred dollars were put down and recorded in Book # 156 pages 437 to 445 plus 493 to 495.

Sam Shapiro bought 718 acres for eight dollars an acre. Jacob Zion sold 400 acres of land to Moses Silberman for three hundred eighteen dollars and fifty six cents. All the men signed their names on the deed in Hebrew.

Israel Zion and his wife, Rebecca then joined Mr. Schoenfield of New York City in creating a real town. The town was laid out by a surveyor from Philadelphia. In his plans, Sheppard M. English outlined a town with a wide Boulevard and streets intersecting each other. Included in this master plan was a hotel, a school, a theatre and homes. Israel and Rebecca Zion built a three story shirt factory near Tuchahoe Road and Dutch Mill Road. On the new map of Ziontown the shirt factory was located at the North East corner of Peltyn and Market Streets. The survey was filed at the County Court House of Gloucester County in Woodbury on January 15th, 1892.

The plan called for lots to be sold in the standard lot size of 25 feet by 150 feet for seventy five dollars. With the shirt factory in place by this time, the town would start to grow. New settlers would be introduced through Philadelphia to come and settle in Ziontown.

Abraham Epstein bought two lots for \$ 175 or eight to ten percent higher than the original \$ 75 per lot. His lot was located on Liberty Street between Peltyn and Washington Avenue. Mr. Nimon Rabinowitz bought two lots for \$ 175 on May 25th, 1892. The wide boulevard was proposed and laid out so that West Jersey Railroad would be invited to run a line through town.

1892  
 79 Van R St.

Jacob Zion  
 and Rebecca, his wife

&

Abraham Epstein

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**Deed.**

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Dated March 11 1892.

The deed offered by the within instrument that  
 in Book \_\_\_\_\_ in 2124  
 of the Land Office of the City of New York  
 the 12th day of January 1892 is recorded  
 as the title of the office of the  
 County of Woodbury, New Jersey  
 160 of the 1st of July 1877, to wit  
 L. C. Condensation, et al.

*[Signature]*

This Indenture, made the Tenth day  
 of May in the year Eight hundred and ninety two  
 Between Jacob Zion and Rebecca, his wife, of the  
 City and County of New York, Parties of the first part; and  
 Abraham Epstein, of the City and County of New  
 York, Party of the second part;  
 Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part for and in consideration  
 of the sum of One hundred and seventy five (\$175.00) Dollars,  
 lawful money of the United States, paid by the party of the second part, do hereby  
 give, grant, sell, alien, release, convey, warrant and release unto the said party of  
 the second part, their heirs and assigns forever, all certain  
 acres & 6/8 of a parcel of land, lying and being in Lion Town, County of Gloucester  
 and State of New Jersey, known and designated as Lots  
 Number 802 and 803 (each lot being 25 by 100 feet), on the  
 Map No. 2 of Lion Town, Gloucester County, New Jersey,  
 surveyed by Sheppard English, and filed in the Office of the  
 County Clerk of the Town of Woodbury, Gloucester County, State  
 of New Jersey, on the 10th day of February, 1892.  
 Said lots being situated in Liberty Street, between Pelton and  
 Washington Avenues.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties of the first part do hereunto set their  
 hands and seals the day and year above written.

In the presence of:  
*[Signature]* Jacob Zion  
*[Signature]* Abraham Epstein

Ziontown

The idea of an industrial settlement was new for its time! Other settlements were conceived with only agriculture as its main source of income for newly arriving Russian Jewish immigrants. The shirt factory sent finished products to Camden, New Jersey for distribution.

In 1892, 78 people were employed in this factory. The town grew and a Post Office was started in Ziontown on June 30th, 1892. The Post Mistress was Emily Uthe.

Hope and promise of a new and growing Jewish settlement was seen as an excellent opportunity to upgrade the self respect of the Jews in this community. But by the middle of the summer of 1892, low wages erupted into malcontent amongst the Jewish settlers. By the end of the summer in 1892, the payroll of the factory was not met by Israel Zion. This event was met with action by the workers rioting in the streets of the this Jewish settlement! The peace of the settlement would never be the same again. Jews were fighting against Jews! The local authorities were out numbered and called in help from the Woodbury sheriff's office. A posse was rounded up and sent to Ziontown to calm the violence and restore law and order!

Four ringleaders of the workers in the uprising were arrested and brought to Woodbury. They included Victor Halbuse, Bornick Lifchin, Barnett Michalowsky and Sam Fooks.

These Jewish men and others bought land with what they thought to be were assurances of Mr. Zion's commitment for employment. No work meant no way in which to repay the loans the settlers took out from the Woodbury Real Estate and Mutual Loan Association. The factory owner wanted his factory property untouched by the men! The men believed they had a right to its access and went into the factory to create work. Mr. Zion could not secure work for these men so the men themselves went out and secured the necessary supplies in order to create the work. They then barricaded themselves inside and refused to allow Mr. Zion on the premises. Access to the idle machinery was the issue at hand. But both sides came to blows with their fists over this action. Common rights and the lack of work for six weeks would ignite this community into rage! The settlers were starving from lack of provisions.

This Indenture, made the Tenth day  
 of March in the year Eight hundred and ninety two  
 Between Jacob Zion and Rebecca, his wife, of the  
 City and County of New York, Parties of the first part; and  
 Abraham Epstein, of the City and County of New  
 York, Party of the second part;  
 Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of  
 One hundred and seventy five (\$175.00) Dollars,  
 lawful money of the United States, paid by the party of the second part, do hereby  
 grant and release unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and  
 assigns forever, all certain acres & 6/8 of a parcel of land, situate,  
 lying and being in Lion Town, County of Gloucester  
 and State of New Jersey, known and designated as Lots  
 Number 802 and 803 (each lot being 25 by 100 feet), on the  
 Map No. 2 of Lion Town, Gloucester County, New Jersey,  
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## Ziontown

By September 1892, the citizens of Ziontown were acting as peace officers. Mr. Jacob Herman Bibo acted as a mediator in this internal Jewish affair. This was done so that the Gentiles in the countryside would not see the Jews fighting with one another.

Mr. Bibo was a German Jew who came to this country in 1867 and settled in Woodbury. He was the first Jew in Woodbury and purchased the Gustav Holstein property in that city in 1890. Jacob went into the manufacturing of cigars. He would travel in the countryside with horse and buggy selling his "Bibo Jumbos". He was recently married to Caroline Firetag in April of 1892.

Mr. Bibo assisted the starving families by getting provisions and groceries to meet their urgent needs in Ziontown. Jacob contacted Simon Muhr of Philadelphia. Simon Muhr, a leading citizen of Philadelphia's Jewish community was a Trustee of the Baron De Hirsch Fund. It was during the High Holidays of 5653 that the Philadelphia Jewish Community was exposed to the plight of the Ziontown Jews. A fund was started in the Philadelphia community to give immediate aid and relief to these Jews. Simon Muhr acted as Treasurer of this fund to help the fifty people in Ziontown.

At the end of 1892, the company of Jews who formed the settlement split the town apart by suing for damages in Franklin Township. With the Depression of 1893 coming to the countryside and into Southern New Jersey put an end to this poorly financed settlement. Jewish people now went to live in nearby Malaga and to farm the land. The failure of the factory did stop Jewish development in Franklin Township.

For some Jews in Ziontown, the High Holidays of 5653 in September 1892 were the first and last in that area. By the end of 1893, the Post Office closed and mail was transferred to the Malaga Post Office. Malaga was gaining more Jews with the arrival of 35 Jews in May 1892.

Jews stayed in the area known as Ziontown well into the 1910's. This is when the children sold the last lots of the Jewish pioneers to new arriving Italian immigrants.

### Reference Source Credit

Gloucester County Court House in Woodbury; Deeds Dept  
Gloucester County Historical Society,

Article by Edythe Holle on Jacob Bibo

Franklin Township Library, formerly the Malaga Library

Article on Ziontown written by Dr. H. Gershonowitz

for internal purposes at Glassboro State College

10th Annual Report of Factories and Industry in NJ : 1892

Preserved at the State Library in Trenton

Article in the Sentinel published in Woodbury Sept 7, 1892.

Article in the Constitution newspaper published Aug 24, 1892

The new Seashore Railroad was started in Nov. 1892