

The Jewish Agricultural Society, Inc.

REPORT
of the
MANAGING DIRECTOR
FOR THE PERIOD
1900-1949

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FOREWORD

As president of The Jewish Agricultural Society at the completion of fifty years of service to the community, it is a privilege for me to write a foreword to this report.

This half century has been marked by a broad advance in the spread of social welfare and betterment for the people of this country through local and national organizations. Among the latter the work of the J. A. S. is unique in its field. It can point with pride through both its financial and educational facilities to the settlement of thousands of Jewish farmers throughout the country. In this manner Jewish families have not only become self supporting and substantial farmers, but have built up a class of citizens that have proven a credit to their race and a source of pride to the entire community.

Throughout the years this record of accomplishment has been attained because of the concerted action of those entrusted with the Society's guidance. The roster of its officers and members of the board of directors include the names of many men of every generation for the past fifty years who have been outstanding in philanthropy and who have devoted their time and energy to the benefit of the Society. I might also add that at no time in its long history have we had a more conscientious and active board of directors than those who are now guiding its affairs and with whom it has been my privilege and pleasure to be associated.

But the ultimate success of the work of the Society could only be accomplished through the medium of an able and competent professional staff. These people, both men and women, have labored unstintingly and unreservedly for the welfare and progress of the Society.

In this respect it is most fitting and proper that I should pay special tribute at this time to Dr. Gabriel Davidson. Associated for forty-three of its fifty years with the Society, Dr. Davidson has been its executive director for thirty-three years. Through his ability and wisdom, his understanding and sympathy, he has been an inspiration for all who have come in contact and worked with him.

It is with confidence that I look forward to the continuance in the future of the constructive and beneficial work that has so far been carried on.

HARRY H. COHEN,
President.

December 31st, 1949

MAURICE DE HIRSCH

A TRIBUTE

The story about to be unfolded could not have been told but for the munificence of one individual, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, whose far flung philanthropies benefited more people than that of any Jew of his age, and whose wise benefactions enriched the lives of thousands. It is eminently fitting, therefore, that the review of The Jewish Agricultural Society's fifty years work should be prefaced by a tribute to that noble character.

Maurice de Hirsch was born in Munich on December 9, 1831, the third of the line to bear the title Baron. He inherited great wealth from his father and grandfather and this was augmented considerably by the personal fortune of his wife, Clara Bischoff-



Baron Maurice de Hirsch

sheim, the daughter of Senator Raphael Bischoffsheim of Brussels, a kindly soul who encouraged and guided her husband in his benefactions.

Successful railroad and financial ventures expanded the Baron's wealth and placed him in the front rank of Europe's financiers and industrialists. Regarded at first as visionary in his business projects, it was precisely that ability to look ahead, which, combined with sound judgment, enabled him to amass his enormous wealth and then to organize and systematize the method of its benevolent dispensation.

Hirsch's first excursion into the field of philanthropy was through the medium of the Alliance Israelite Universelle whose work he supported with lavish contributions up to the time of his death. The desperate plight of the Jews in Russia especially saddened him, and he offered the Russian Government the vast sum of fifty million francs to be used for the amelioration of the condition of the Jews in the Czar's domain. When that government tied up the acceptance of the gift with terms which to the mind of the Baron were unsatisfactory, the conclusion pressed itself upon him that the salvation of the Russian Jew lay in his emigration from that benighted country. This resulted in the foundation of the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891, whose operations are world wide. In the United States the Baron established the Baron de Hirsch Fund also in 1891 to aid those who had fled from abodes of darkness to make a new start in these more hospitable climes.

Maurice de Hirsch was a staunch advocate of farming as an occupation for the Jewish masses. "In the lands where Jews had been permitted to acquire landed property," he wrote, "where they have found opportunity to devote themselves to agriculture, they have proved themselves excellent farmers. . . . These convictions led me to my activity to better the unhappy lot of the poor downtrodden Jews; and my efforts shall show that the Jews have not lost the agricultural qualities that their forefathers possessed." In 1900 the ICA joined with the Fund in founding The Jewish Agricultural Society to guide and develop the Jewish agricultural movement in the United States and to place Jewish agricultural interests on a sound footing.

In the half century since 1900 many thousands of Jews have been enabled to find surcease from wandering, a haven where

they could devote themselves to the pastoral calling of their early forebears, and settle down to peace and security, each under his own vine and fig tree. That he built well, the many Jewish farm settlements in America and elsewhere, the many thousands of Jews who have benefited by his generosity give eloquent testimony. Today, fifty-four years after his demise, the great work he set in motion still goes on as his vision, his understanding and, above all, his compassion fashioned it.

On April 21, 1896, Maurice de Hirsch was gathered unto his fathers. But his spirit lives on. It lives in the hearts of the multitudes whom he has benefited and will live as long as there are those on this sphere who have been raised by his bounty.



With his wife and daughter this eminent seed grower, a graduate of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School and a former livestock specialist with the United States Department of Agriculture, is looking over one of his fields in South Dakota. For his plant breeding achievements he was commended by the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and signally honored on a number of occasions, recently at the South Dakota State Agricultural College as "Eminent Farmer of 1949."

FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

A REVIEW

The Jewish Agricultural Society was founded in 1900 for the purpose of promoting farming among Jews in the United States. Since this year marks the completion of fifty years of labor, it is proper to take a glance over the intervening years to see to what extent that purpose has been fulfilled.

When the Society began to function there was no blueprint. There was no plan. There was no qualified personnel. The Society had to create its own *modus operandi*, make its own mistakes and discover, so to speak, its own soul. But the central and perplexing hurdle was the human problem.

Consider the people with and for whom the Society had to work. They came from benighted lands where for almost two thousand years agriculture had been a proscribed occupation. The majority were wretchedly impoverished, strange to America's ways, unfamiliar with its tongue, dazed and confused. The task that confronted the Society's founders was to help fashion this inchoate mass into a normal healthy structure, a task to stagger all but the dauntless. But dauntless were the founders, experienced leaders, men of sound judgment and high vision.

The best part of the first decade was devoted pretty much to experimentation. Projects were attempted and, if found unworkable, abandoned. There were colonies in South Jersey, established twenty years earlier, which needed uplifting and revivification industrially, agriculturally and culturally. There were colonies in Wisconsin, in Maryland and in Texas; small groups in the middle-west settled by the Jewish Agriculturists Aid Society of America (later absorbed by the Jewish Agricultural Society) which needed nursing. There were Jews on homesteads in northwestern states in desperate straits whom the Society tried to help, but in vain. There was the "Test Farm" on Long Island, N. Y. designed to give families of modest means agricultural training preliminary to settlement. Discontinued after five years, this effort led to the establishment of the Society's Farm Employment Department.

There was the Farm Purchase Program under which the Society bought farms for resale on nominal downpayments — another venture found impractical.

While this saga of trial and error was being enacted, the directors never faltered. The Society was learning lessons. It learned the importance of sizing up applicants, of encouraging the fit and discouraging the unfit. It developed techniques for farm appraisal. It had impacts with dishonest real estate agents, resulting in a concerted effort at fraud prevention. From the very beginning, everything was done to extend assistance in a form which any self respecting man could accept without sacrifice of prestige or dignity. Indeed, so anxious were the directors to remove all tinge of eleemosynary implication that, when the word "Industrial" was removed from the Society's name, the word "Aid" was also dropped.

When the Society appeared on the scene a hasty survey revealed that there were little over a thousand Jewish persons on farms in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. By the end of the first decade the Society had listed families in 37 states comprising over 15,000 souls which in its opinion was only about half of the actual Jewish farm population. The activities of the Society kept pace with this growth. Gradually and steadily there were developed a comprehensive agricultural education and extension service, a planned settlement service, a purchasing service, a farm employment division, a department of rural sanitation, a program of agricultural cooperation. The Society, at various times, collaborated with the Jewish Chautauqua Society, the National Council of Jewish Women, United Synagogue of America, to advance the religious, cultural and social interests of farm communities. By outright gifts or interest free loans, it encouraged the erection of synagogues and community buildings. For a time the Society awarded agricultural scholarships and granted student loans.

Space limitations preclude treatment even in modest detail. Only major highlights can be set down.

When the Society was founded and for years afterwards, farm credit was woefully insufficient. The lack was acutely felt by Jewish farmers, not necessarily because they were Jews, but be-

cause they were strangers in a strange land and in a strange calling. That is why the Society's initial activity had to be financial, though in no sense eleemosynary. A cardinal principle laid down at the very beginning was that the Jewish farmer should finance his operations as far as possible in the same manner as other farmers, falling back upon the Society only where credit is not otherwise obtainable or obtainable only on prohibitive terms. Distance is no bar. The man in Oregon or Florida stands on the same footing as the man within striking distance of the Society's headquarters or its branches.

The Society's loan policy differs from that of the usual farm loan institution. The latter looks principally to security and appraises mainly the farm. The Society evaluates the farmer just as carefully and weighs likewise the purposes for which a loan is to be used. Loans have been denied where their purposes appeared unwise even though security was of the best. On the other hand, loans have been granted against poor security where they could be put to constructive purposes, or where they bridged emergencies. The Society must face the possibility of loss where there is even a long chance of rehabilitating a farm family. The men who pass upon loans, see in each application not simply the dry factual statement, but the human being behind it. The Directors have always kept in mind that the Society's business is to make farmers not farm loans, that a loan is simply one step in that process and that the Society would be remiss if it placed too much weight on tangible security and not enough on the probity of the individual. The Society's patience and forbearance to relate repayment to the borrower's paying ability, have kept many a family on the farm when the going was tough.

Interest collections are used toward defraying the Society's operating expenses. In the early years they provided about half the cost, today about a third. Annual subsidies from the Baron de Hirsch Fund, increased from time to time, make up the difference. Only a relatively small part of expenditures goes for administration. The larger share pays for the ramified vocational, educational and guidance services.

A large proportion of the loans are made on junior real estate mortgages, chattel mortgages and unsecured notes. In the last three years, for instance, only 2.5% of the loans were on first mort-

gages. It is understandable that losses are inevitable, that chips fall off the wheel in the process of rotation. Before the depression, losses were not serious. During the depression they were a matter of real concern and the Society's securities shrank drastically. With the upswing in industry and farming, losses tapered off sharply and in the last few years have been little more than nominal.

The unfortunate thing is that losses cannot be retrieved. Fortunately the Baron de Hirsch Fund has so far been able to step into the breach. But a loss sustained by the Society means a loss sustained by the Fund. The combined resources are not too abundant. Throughout its half century of existence, the Society made no attempt to tap public support, though it has received an occasional gift or bequest. If the onward march of the Jewish farm move-



During their summer vacation his three sons are a great help to this eastern Connecticut farmer who, like so many of the earlier settlers, chose dairying as their principle occupation.

ment exhausts available funds, the time may come when the American Jewish public will have to be called upon to share the load.

A word about the loaning activity of the past twelve months. Applications totalling \$1,466,190 in amount, ranging from \$100 to \$10,870 were received. Approved farm loans aggregated \$560,625 representing 283 loans in sixteen states. These are record figures. 73% of the amount approved went to new farmers, mostly to refugees, DPs and veterans. The older farmers either did not need loans or could borrow elsewhere. Because farms and all that go with them were expensive, the average loan reached the peak mark of \$1981, as against \$980 in 1940.

Principal repayments exceeded first of the year estimates; so did interest collections. The former amounted to \$241,955, the latter to \$51,535. Yet, though interest came in satisfactorily, it represented only 33% of the cost of administration and educational services.

It is pleasing to be able to report that no loss on farm loans was suffered in 1949, evidence that the losses heretofore taken as an aftermath of the depression have cleared out the dead timber.

Pursuing its policy not to rule out applications because of geographical location, the Society has in its fifty years of loaning operation reached 41 states and lent almost \$11,500,000. It may be safely estimated that these loans have benefited directly or indirectly over 50,000 individuals.

Prospective farmers come from various stations of life and from every conceivable occupation. It is the Society's job to make this multicomplexioned array aware that farming is not only an occupation out of which to earn a living, but a mode of life which touches every member of the family and which demands adaptation to change which not all city folks possess. No two cases are alike. Each presents its own set of problems. Each demands specific solution. Few realize the sifting, the seeking, the fitting, the negotiating, the financing, the planning, the teaching that precede the launching of a farm enterprise.

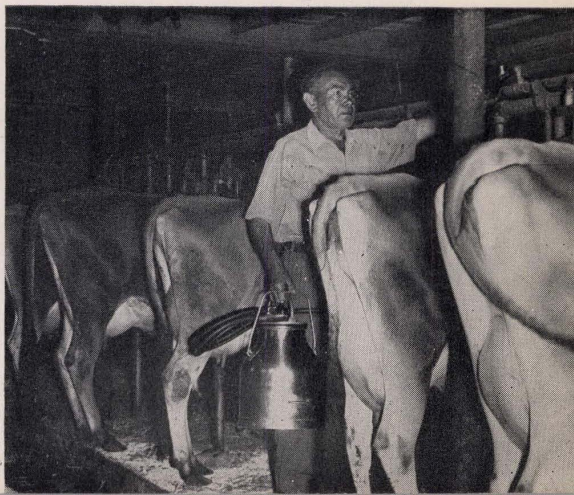
It goes without saying that not all farm families stick. With Jewish farmers scattered over such a far flung area it is impossible to make an exact check on their sticktoitiveness. According to the

Society's records, only 132 of the 1,209 families settled during the past ten years are reported as having left their farms, a record that compares more than favorably with mortality rates in business enterprises. The Society ascribes this result to the fact that it took pains to avoid the mistakes of the early colonization efforts when families were placed without regard to location, character of land, individual aptitude, capital, family attitude toward farm living. Instead, effort was directed to placing families on farms which were going concerns or which could readily be made such, in good locations, on good highways, with reasonably modern equipment.

One important aspect of settlement activity is worthy of emphasis. The Jew on the farm draws other Jews, both to farms and to neighboring towns and villages. Once the Jew leaves the city, he seldom returns to it even if he ceases to be a farmer. The Society stresses the value of any tendency that lifts the pressure from the city, even in small measure.

With the growth in the number of Jewish families established on farms, fair sized Jewish farm communities gradually evolved. The Society aimed to settle Jewish farmers, not in compact groups but yet fairly close together, in order to promote adjustment to the American milieu while preserving cultural and religious Jewish identity. In this way synagogues and religious schools could be maintained, the farmers and their families could get together for various communal purposes, and yet become part and parcel of the general farm body. Thus Jewish farming communities were built up in the so-called "Mountain" districts and in other parts of New York State, in the Connecticut River Valley and other sections of Connecticut, in the middle west, in California and elsewhere. Fine examples are the Jewish set-

A graduate of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School, and one of the first farmers in New England to establish a commercial poultry farm while developing an orchard, he has also taken up the raising of pure-bred Jersey cows.



tlements scattered throughout New Jersey—a favored state because of its rounded agricultural possibilities, its proximity to large metropolitan centers and its exceptional marketing opportunities. Striking instances of Jewish farm settlements built by the steady infiltration of individual families directed by the Society in New Jersey, are those in Toms River, Lakewood and Farmingdale, and those in and around Vineland. The most recent example is Fontana, California, later reported upon.

An integral part of farm settlement is to see that the farm buyer gets a square deal, whether he comes to the Society or not, and to prevent exploitation in farm purchase. The problem of combating fraud is not easy. The Society has used a variety of media, educational and otherwise. It has been responsible for eliminating misleading advertisements. It has called sharp practices to the attention of real estate boards. It has caused dishonest agents to be driven out of their states. It has forced swindlers to make restitution of their illicit gain. The Society can truthfully claim that as a result of its standing guard, fraud and misrepresentation have been drastically reduced.

A word about 1949 settlement activity.

1721 farm seeking families came to the Society's offices as compared with 1160 in 1948 and 952 in 1947. 271 families were established on farms in California, Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio, the largest number in the Society's history. 162 of the new farmers required settlement loans aggregating \$408,200. The others were able to finance themselves.

From the time the Farm Settlement Department got into its stride in 1919, to the end of the current year, over 30,485 persons came to the Society for advice about establishing themselves on farms and the Society was directly instrumental in settling 3,020 families, indirectly a much larger number. Since many farm families include dependent parents and other relatives, it may be conservatively estimated that the Society was responsible in one way or another for the settlement of 20,000 persons on farms in 18 states. These figures do not include the thousands of families helped by the Society in other ways.

The Farm Education and Extension Department was the Society's response to the recognition that farming for the Jew is an

A farmers' synagogue erected with J.A.S. assistance in south-eastern Connecticut.



acquisition not an inheritance, that the problem of making a Jewish farmer embraces not only craftsmanship but adjustment. The American farmer has long had access to a mass of agricultural information disseminated by federal, state and county agencies upon every conceivable branch of farming. Clearly, if native farmers with generations of farming behind them need elaborate aids, people to to whom farming is new and strange cannot be left to fumble and flounder. The aim set for the Society's educational service was to open the storehouse of agricultural information and to translate it into terms of easy understanding. The service was not intended to supplant governmental extension work but simply to supplement and implement it.

The most effective instrument in the Society's extension work is the individual farm visit through the medium of which agricultural information is brought directly to the farmer's door by men expertly trained and temperamentally equipped—possible only in the more settled Jewish farm districts in the northeast, parts of the midwest and in California. This is of special value to the new farmer, although even the advanced farmer is not too proficient to benefit by an occasional suggestion from an expert agriculturist. The Society's educational program also includes farm meetings, lectures, demonstrations, "field days," farmers institutes, local, state and regional conferences.

As part of the educational approach, the Society issues *THE JEWISH FARMER*, a monthly magazine. Published at first only in Yiddish, English was introduced, and during the height of the German refugee flow, a German section was included. Today the major part of the publication is in English. From time to time agricultural text books, pamphlets and timely leaflets were issued, some in English and some in Yiddish and, for a time, a Yiddish correspondence course was conducted. Three new columns were

introduced in **THE JEWISH FARMER** this year—two by New Jersey county agents and the third under the heading **TIMELY REMINDERS**, compiled by the **FARMERS'** editor.

During the last 25 years night schools in agriculture have been conducted in New York and, since 1938, in Chicago, to give prospective farmers a glimpse into the realities of farm life, to present certain principles of farm management which can be taught in a city class room. Class room instruction is supplemented by tours to state agricultural institutions and progressive farms operated by Jews.

To provide a source through which approved materials can be reasonably bought, a Purchasing Service was set up. This bureau does more than simply accept and fill orders. Indeed, orders are turned down where the purchases seem injudicious. When supplies are tight, new sources of supply are sought out. The purchases range from small articles to electrically operated machinery, tractors and trucks. In 1949 the Purchasing Service filled orders for a quarter million doses of poultry vaccines — a record figure. Of greater importance than the monetary savings, were the accompanying instructions on proper timing, combinations and application of materials — a service of especial value to beginners.

1949 brought its specific problems. Prolonged droughts, severe and protracted heat waves adversely affected crops. The value of utilizing irrigation equipment was clearly demonstrated. In certain spots the practice of more efficient soil management was of some aid. Poultrymen were also hit. Poultry ranges deteriorated, birds weakened. As a result more than the normal incidence of



Enrollees in the J.A.S. orientation courses for prospective farmers.

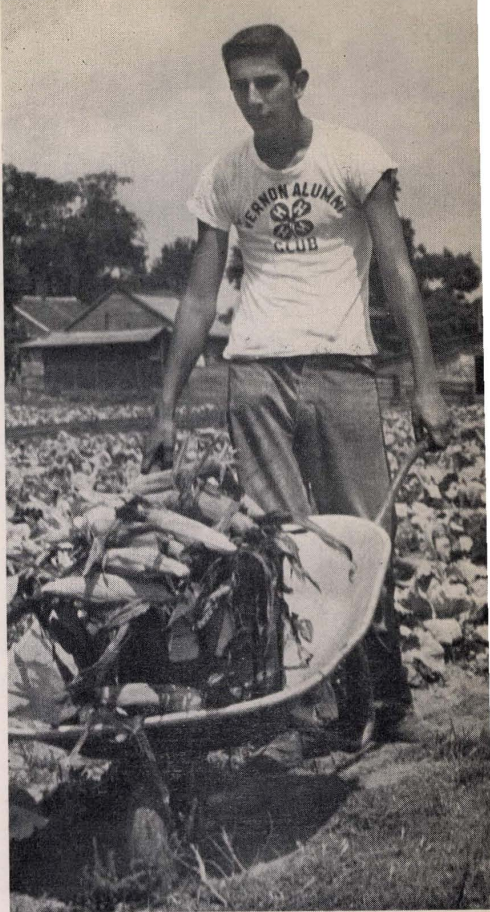
respiratory troubles developed among laying flocks. The department vigorously pressed immunization campaigns stressing the importance of timely vaccination with proper material.

The department's tasks this year were made more difficult by the increased number of recent immigrants who, because of slender means, started on farms that needed modernization or on places without plant or equipment. The department had to see to it that the remodeling or new construction was done as economically as possible and yet in accordance with approved plans and design.

Three major conferences deserve mention. The annual Field Day was held in Vineland, New Jersey, the area which has the largest concentration of new settlers, mostly refugees and DPs. The Poultry Conference, also an annual affair, was held at the Educational Alliance in New York City and was attended by 500 farmers and farm seekers. At another conference,

also held at the Educational Alliance, the subjects discussed included control of pests and diseases, soil liming and fertilization, and other aspects of soil conservation. Among those who addressed the conferences was Dr. R. P. Holdsworth of the DuPont de Nemours Company, Dr. Jacob S. Joffe, Rutgers Agricultural College, Dr. V. F. Beck of the New Jersey Agricultural Extension Service and Dr. Joseph C. S. Shaffer, a veterinarian of standing.

In the three decades since the organization of the Department



This third generation young Jewish farmer has attained leadership in 4-H Club work in the community.

its staff made 83,331 farm visits, and held 4,058 farm meetings, lectures, demonstrations, "field days," farmers institutes, and local, state and regional conferences with an estimated aggregate attendance of over 83,000. Besides 65,783 individual consultations were held at the Society's offices.

In the early years, the Society had found work on farms for a few men each season, but no systematic effort at job placement had been attempted until the inauguration of the Farm Employment Department in 1908. Its primary aim, then as now, is not job placement per se, not simply to supply a farmer with a farm hand or a farm hand with a job. The objective is to prepare farm minded persons for farm positions which demand higher skill or for eventual farm ownership. It is true that only relatively few farm workers have evolved into farm owners, but where they have, the resultant farm enterprises have, in most cases, been successful. The Society's Farm Employment Department differs from the ordinary employment agency. Its service is free. In so far as possible, it investigates both employer and employee before bringing them together. When wage disputes or other differences arise, it helps effect adjustments. Wherever possible, it follows up workers to keep track of their progress.

A farm job today is much different from a farm job two or three decades ago. Then the farmer was content with the man who could perform simple farm chores. But with the revolutionary changes farming has undergone, the farm hand today must know how to handle complex and expensive machinery. Because of mechanization the farmer requires less help, but he is willing to pay the price for higher skills and scientific knowledge. On the whole, farm labor has risen to distinctly higher economic and social levels.

During 1949, 767 persons sought jobs on farms, 154 were placed. Farmers needed skilled men whereas most job



Champions both—farm-bred agricultural student at the University of Connecticut, winner of highest awards in the State for junior projects; and a rooster of his prize-winning flock in the "Chicken-of-Tomorrow" contest.

seekers had no experience. A distinct social service was rendered to some who were placed. Thus, work was obtained for thirty-one refugee families, a few with two children, this in the face of the fact that most farmers do not care to employ couples with young children. Jobs were also found for a sixty year old man who had been floundering about; for an inmate of a penal institution whose parole was conditioned on obtaining a farm job; for a lad in a correctional school; and for two men referred by the New York City's Department of Welfare who were rapidly going down hill, and who at last report were still on their jobs. A refugee woman is doing scientific work on a high class breeding farm where her mother is also employed. Two refugees, who were placed early in the year, bought farms after a brief apprenticeship.

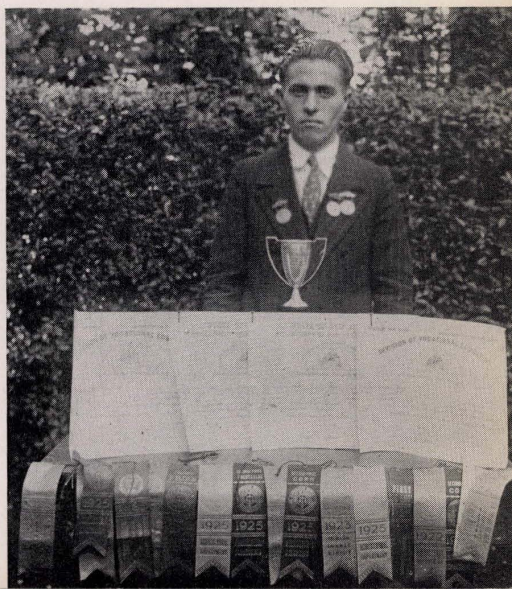
An Italian couple (Christian) and a colored couple were among those for whom work was provided.

Since the Department started to function, it effected 20,406 placements in 32 states.

The Rural Sanitation Department was established in 1918, prompted by a report portraying the unsatisfactory state of sanitation then existing in sections of Ulster and Sullivan Counties in New York State. Though these conditions were not peculiar to those sections, they were intensified by the influx of vacationists during the summer season. In cooperation with State health officials, and eminent health authorities, a program was mapped out to attack four major sanitation problems—sewage disposal, water supply, garbage disposal and food protection.

In its campaign, the Society has made us of every recognized form of public health education but placed

His outstanding achievements in junior agricultural project work foreshadowed this champion's rise to eminence in the agricultural profession. He is at present Executive Assistant to the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture.



its chief reliance on the individual visit from farm to farm. An important demonstration center was the Society's sanitation exhibit, located on the grounds of its branch office at Ellenville, New York, which for over twenty-five years served as an aid to farmers who came to study the sanitary devices installed there.

Aroused to the importance of better sanitation, farmers, rooming and boarding house owners, formed a sanitation league, adopted a sanitary code, and awarded diplomas of merit for compliance with recommendations. It functioned for several years.

It was not long before this work received recognition, local, state and even national. Wrote the then Judge of the New York State Court of Claims, a native of Ellenville, "No state or official agency could accomplish what you have done." From a Town Supervisor, "We as a Town Board of Health have endeavored to establish better sanitary ordinances and we feel that in this we have succeeded only through your cooperation." And from the State Sanitary Supervisor, "Your Society is particularly fitted to do this educational work. The results already obtained amply justify the undertaking." Finally from the United States Public Health Service, "It is a record of remarkable progress under exceedingly interesting conditions in the public health field. The work done by your Sanitation Department is not only of local importance but is of state wide and national importance from a demonstration standpoint."

The Society also made excursion into parts of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In essence, the sanitation problem is the same in all rural areas though most pronounced where population is greatest.

The Society's labors produced definite improvement. Screening of kitchens and dining rooms soon became common practice. Garbage is now properly disposed of. More attention is paid to the upkeep of farm premises. The once ubiquitous open privy has practically vanished. The unprotected well is taboo. Water sources have been tightened and covered, sewage outfits repaired or rebuilt, septic tank systems installed. But, best of all, a sanitation consciousness has been implanted.

For the best part of two decades the JAS was the sole agency consistently and persistently in the field. Though state and county supervision has been enlarged, the Society must still at times act

The vegetable garden is a source of wholesome food and diversion for this family, rated as among the most skillful and successful poultry breeders in the Northeast, if not in the entire country.



as mentor, friend, liaison agent. Of course, the need for the Society's labors has lessened. It can now limit its activity to seasonal check-up, work with new

proprietors who have not had the benefit of sanitation teaching, to emergency calls and to consultative function.

In the thirty years of its functioning the Department has made 20,658 farm visits. Through lectures and health talks before farm gatherings, town and village boards, farm and home bureaus, groups of summer vacationists, county medical societies, fraternal organizations, assemblies in villages and public schools, the Society has been privileged to preach the gospel of better sanitation and better health to a total audience of over a quarter million.

As Jewish farm groups sprang up in various parts of the country and farm sentiment in these areas became more pronounced, the Society deemed it advisable to open branch offices to afford farmers and farm seekers easier access to advice and information. The first branch was established in 1912 in Chicago with jurisdiction over seven or eight midwestern states, containing the large cities of Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis.

The Jewish farm groups that have claimed much attention are those in southwestern Michigan, near Chicago, and those around Cleveland.

Benton Harbor, Michigan contains the oldest Jewish farm community in the middlewest dating back to the beginning of the century. Farming here is highly specialized and land is expensive. Benton Harbor is the hub of a noted fruit belt and Jews have become expert at fruit growing. At its fortieth anniversary celebration, its historian declared "When all other financial institutions were closed to us, the Society's doors were always wide open to all of us and its financing was on the easiest possible terms, second,

third, fourth and chattel mortgage and mere note. The Society conducted educational and cultural meetings which raised the cultural level of both old and young."

Some twenty-five miles from Benton Harbor lies South Haven where farming is more diversified and where there was developed an active commercial poultry group. As the farm population grew, the farmers joined the Jewish urban contingent in erecting a synagogue and center building, which would be a credit to a community of much larger size. The Society made a loan to help construction, and the mortgage-burning celebration was held in 1942.

About thirty-five years ago Jews commenced to go on farms in the vicinity of Geneva, Ohio, about forty-five miles from Cleveland. Conforming to local practice, they engaged in viticulture as a specialty. They made rapid strides, increased their grape acreage and built up their vineyards until at the height of that industry's prosperity (in the mid 1920's) the Jewish group, though a small fraction of the total farm population, produced over 60% of the grapes raised in that section. Unfortunately, specialization was pushed too far and the grape growers fell on hard times. The



The use of such modern devices as a steam sterilizer is an index to the type of farming which enabled this family, in south-central Connecticut, to acquire a reputation in North and South America for high quality poultry breeding stock.

Society had to devote much effort to tide stricken farmers over their dark days. Educational programs had to be carried on, creditors had to be approached, debt compromises arranged, many knotty financial problems unravelled. Taught by their tough experience, farmers later began to practice diversification. Hard times thinned their ranks. But those that stuck were rewarded for their persistence. The Society sustained heavy losses. But the Society's encouragement saved families from losing their farms at a time when destitution might have faced them in the city.

During the life of the Chicago branch, 8,450 applications were processed, 1,787 loans aggregating \$1,064,496 were granted, 211 families were settled and 13,448 miscellaneous investigations and 19,140 consultations were conducted. Individual and group instruction was carried on in the wide flung sections under its jurisdiction.

When the Society was founded, the work theretofore carried on by the Baron de Hirsch Fund in the so-called South Jersey colonies was transferred to it. The Fund had erected a number of factories to provide employment for farmers between seasons and for the children whose help was not needed on the farm. The work was in charge of an agent in Philadelphia. The industrial matters gradually declined, while agricultural affairs steadily assumed greater prominence. The agency was therefore enlarged into a branch in 1917. This enabled the Society to extend its field of operations to other parts of New Jersey and to spread out into Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland.

In 1932, the South Jersey colonists celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Alliance, Norma and Brotmanville. Side by side with original settlers—venerable old men and

The Honorable Alfred Benesch (right), former President of the Cleveland Board of Education, on a visit with one of the older Jewish farmers in Ohio.



women — sat the later comers, a different, though by no means a superior type. The difference lay only in the fact that the younger ones had had the benefit of their elders' experience and firmer integration into the American milieu. A similar celebration was staged in Carmel, one of the original colonies, the following year.

The Philadelphia branch also had jurisdiction over Woodbine, which had been founded by the Baron de Hirsch Fund in 1891 as an agro-industrial settlement. Aided by the Fund and by the Society, new farmers came in and modern poultry plants were built up. As in the colonies, some Woodbine farms are now in the hands of children, and even grandchildren, of the original settlers.

The significance of these settlements is that, out of all the earlier colonization efforts, they are the only survivors. They gave character, strength and inspiration to many who received their early training there and went forth in all directions to make places for themselves in agriculture, industry, in the professions and in the arts.

The Philadelphia branch was discontinued in 1935. With the improvement in modes of travel, it was felt that these regions could be administered direct by the home office. Its statistical records were merged with those of headquarters.

In 1920 the Society opened a branch at Ellenville, New York, to serve an area that contains the densest Jewish rural population



New settlers, recent arrivals from D.P. centers, relaxing during the J.A.S. sponsored annual field day of South Jersey farmers.

Following in the footsteps of his father, who is one of Delaware's most progressive vegetable and fruit growers, this young farmer operates in a modern way with up-to-date equipment.



in the United States. The region under its jurisdiction was then, as it is now, the summer playground for multitudes of city people, mainly from New York. For a few years following the close of World War I, these attractive spots drew many Jewish

farm buyers. This brought in its train a rampant land speculation with its attendant evils. Many early Jewish farmers followed in the footsteps of the older stock by adding summer boarding to their farm operations. This created new problems. Sanitation in rural areas at that time was there, as elsewhere, on a low level, leading to the establishment of the Society's Rural Sanitation Department, already discussed.

The Society was convinced that farming in these areas could be made more productive and more profitable. And it also realized that it would have to go beyond its specific function, if it were to be of benefit to the component parts of the Mountain population whose interests were closely interwoven. Local social agencies were few and not too strong. The Society deemed it wise to take measures to correct ills and to promote the general welfare of a countryside which possessed such varied possibilities. The branch at Ellenville, the geographical center of these humming areas, was to serve as the Society's regional headquarters for settlement, educational, sanitation, cultural and other activities.

The labors of this branch brought results. Fraud in farm purchase has virtually been stamped out. Sanitary standards compare favorably with those in well ordered farm communities. Farming has advanced quantitatively and qualitatively. Herds are tuberculin tested and blood tested against Bangs disease. Registered stock has been brought in. Modern poultry buildings house flocks

of the finest breeds and Jewish poultrymen are among the leading breeders in the State. A second generation of Jewish farmers, some members of which are agricultural graduates, are working side by side with their parents or on their own farms. A third generation is growing up. In general the farm economy is better rounded and more diversified. Cooperatives and credit unions have been organized. Community centers have been built. In fine, there were few problems affecting individuals or communities in the solution of which the office did not have a hand. The catalogue is impressive — religious schools, bible classes for adults, night school in English, Americanization and naturalization, arbitration, immigration, inter-faith meetings, etc. Then there were the more intimate human problems, the adjustment of family quarrels, the composition of partnership disputes, the obtainment of medical and hospital care, juvenile delinquency. And this is not the full list. The office served as headquarters for the local land bank association and as a meeting place for governmental agencies. From it were conducted bond drives and other patriotic campaigns.

The branch head, now head of the Society's Farm Settlement and Loan Department, cooperated in sponsoring and supervising two training schools of the Victory Farm Cadet Training program. He was also called to serve in numerous civic capacities, which both directly and indirectly were of benefit to the Society's clients. At various times he was district commissioner of Boy Scouts, synagogue president, Talmud Torah president, president of the Ellenville Credit Union, officer of the local chamber of commerce, village trustee, member of the Ellenville School Board and its president for five terms.

The districts grew to healthful maturity. They developed their own communal services. They became capable of doing for themselves the many things formerly done for them by the Society. Good roads and the automobile have contracted space and have made the Mountains almost a suburb of New York City, so that they, as other farming communities, can be served from the Society's headquarters. Because of these con-



**Home office of the Associated
Cooperative Fire Insurance Com-
panies, in Woodridge, N. Y.**

siderations, the Ellenville branch was closed in 1945. A local resident extension specialist is maintained to handle agricultural problems.

Upon the closing of the office, representative citizens from farm and village, Jew and Christian, a cross section of the entire community, paid tribute to the branch head for his twenty-five years of service, by presenting him and the Society with a testimonial volume containing over 1300 signatures.

Using round numbers, this office handled close to 4000 loan applications aggregating about \$4,000,000 of which 2000 totalling about \$1,000,000 were granted. Including sanitation and extension approximately 25,000 office conferences were held and over 20,000 farm visits made.

While the Society had made loans to farmers in all three Pacific states, it had no direct contact with them. Toward the close of World War II, the Jewish population, along with the general population, jumped markedly and inquiries began to come in from service men and civilians engaged in war work about agricultural opportunities on the coast. Predictions were that the Pacific states would be the fastest growing area in the country with virtually unlimited horizons, industrially, commercially and agriculturally. The Society, therefore, instituted a comprehensive study of the agricultural situation. The survey disclosed that there were definite possibilities and that there was an appreciable interest in farming on the part of both new and old residents. The survey contained the revealing observation that Jewish farm settlement had lagged because of the absence of a guidance agency, that the

Harvesting a bumper crop of apples on a farm established by the young man's grandfather in the New York's Hudson Valley fruit belt.



few Jewish farm communities which existed would have had a healthier growth had they had a helping hand, that Jewish families had left farms because of isolation and lack of community life. These findings moved the Society to establish a branch at Los Angeles in June 1945. It soon became clear that the branch would fill a vital need. Within a few months, though the existence of the office was barely known, 132 persons had made contact with it. Inquiries came not only from California, but also from other Pacific States, the Midwest and even the East.

Decided difficulties presented themselves. As elsewhere, farm prices were out of line, but in California the inflationary spiral was especially sharp. Then, too, the tendency is toward specialization, an uncertain and dangerous practice for the small man who can be wiped out in a single season. Again, the small farmer feels more keenly than elsewhere the competition of large industrialized farms, with their vast production and highly developed marketing techniques. All this heightened the task of conservative farm settlement. The plan laid out for the newcomer embraces a combination of poultry with some citrus, the development of retail markets and where feasible, outside work. Some of the regions are well adapted to part time farming. Around Los Angeles, where land is expensive, a unique type of small farm has been developed. It is a practical and efficient unit near or within the city limits—a virtual *rus in urbe*. A farm of this kind may have a dwelling house, a garage, a garden, a fruit orchard and poultry

houses or cages for about two thousand chickens. This type of setup has the approval of agricultural authorities and is claimed to be fully as spractical and economical as the five or ten acre poultry farm in less favored climates. One of the Jewish farmers keeps six thousand laying chickens and raises



Turkey raising is but one of this immigrant's agricultural pursuits in central Texas. He also operates a hatchery, in addition to raising some beef cattle.

Beginners in a recently established settlement in lower California are receiving pointers on chicken culling from a young native of an older colony.

his own stock on three quarters of an acre.

By the end of 1946, when the office had been open only about a year and a half, 294 farm minded persons had sought its advice and 881 office consultations had been held. Forty families had been established. At this writing the branch has dealt with 714 farm aspirants, settled 161 families, among them refugees, DPs and veterans, received applications totalling over a half million dollars. 93 loans aggregating \$192,300 were granted upon its recommendation. Despite opportunities to sell, very few succumbed to the lure of profit.

The largest Jewish agricultural community in California is Petaluma, one of the important poultry centers in the United States. It is reputed to contain about 250 Jewish farm families, organized for cooperative, social and religious activities. Some newcomers were directed there and communal life received new impetus. A body of local advisors was appointed to cooperate with the Society.

A Jewish farm community which is in a real sense the Society's handiwork is in Fontana, fifty miles east of Los Angeles. It was started by the branch head when he first came to Los Angeles and it has grown to 60 families. Following the traditional pattern, the new arrivals formed an organization comprised of farm and village residents. The head of the Society's branch was the guiding spirit. He helped in the organizational procedures, arranged high holiday services and officiated at them.

Ground has likewise been prepared for Jewish farm community organizations in San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley and in San Diego County where there are nuclei for larger Jewish farm settlements.

While the chief function is to make new farmers and guide the



old ones, there are multifarious duties, some extra curricular, which the Los Angeles head has to perform—organizing and attending meetings, demonstrations, lectures, arranging English lessons for DPs, working with committees in various fields, besides rendering personal services. He was also instrumental in bringing about a decided change in the attitude of governmental agricultural agencies toward the new farmers. Whereas these farmers were at first looked upon askance, governmental agents now are glad to address Jewish farm gatherings, and where possible, to make personal visits.

The Society had known in a general way that Jews all along had been engaged in active farming in the Pacific states, but the establishment of the office revealed the scale of their participation, especially in California. Jews pioneered successfully, became masters in large operations, grower-shippers second to none. They operate large acreages under irrigation, in one instance, 10,000. They graze and fatten cattle. They maintain huge dairy herds. They produce large quantities of grain, cotton and fruits of various types. The head of the office claims that it is no exaggeration to say that Jews own and operate a quarter million acres in California.

The fourth decade in the Society's life dawned against a dark vista. Not even the most confirmed optimist could derive comfort from surveying the American farm scene following the stock market crash in the fall of 1929. In three years the cash income from farm marketings fell sixty per cent and gross farm income dropped to the lowest level in twenty years. Farm values suffered cruel deflation. Farm mortgage debt steadily mounted. Foreclosures were more numerous than in any previous period in the country's history. And no section was immune, no branch of farming exempt. Farm bankruptcies skyrocketed. Country banks failed, mortgages were called. Even Federal Land Banks discontinued taking applications. It was not until 1933 that the gloom began to lift. Embracing legislation was enacted to stabilize farm prices and to replenish the dried up reservoirs of farm credit.

During the hard years, Jewish farmers, in common with other farmers, suffered. Fortunately most Jewish farmers were engaged in those branches of farming—dairying, poultry, vegetable and

small fruit—which were hit more by lack of domestic buying power than over production. They also had the advantage of favorable location with easier access to markets, and the opportunity to retail their products. Coming mostly from trades, many Jewish farmers were, even in hard times, able to find some city work to add a little to farm income. While these features by no means gave immunity, they mitigated the severity of depression.

The Society felt the full force of the nationwide disturbance. The need for economy, on the one hand, and the necessity to stand by on the other, meant a severe strain on its whole machinery. In their search for a way out many Jews, uprooted by economic processes, cast their eyes toward the farm. The number of farm seekers in 1932 was, with the single exception of the boom year 1920, the highest on record. The Society was in a dilemma. City people were crying for loans to settle on farms. Established farmers were crying for loans to enable them to continue. To keep an equable balance between these two sets of demands, both meritorious, called for painful decisions. The Society's loaning capacity was at a low ebb, repayments having dropped to the lowest point in almost twenty years.

Losses rose alarmingly. Within the short space of five years beginning 1930, they aggregated more than in the entire period from 1900 to 1930. Yet, when loan institutions with incomparably stronger structures were experiencing rough sailing or foundering completely, the wonder was that the Society was able to keep afloat.

During this troubled period the Society's collection policy, generous yet sound, enabled those to remain on their farms, who, but for its forbearance, would have been compelled to give up the battle, to return to the city, there to join the already swollen ranks of the unemployed, or to drift on to heavily laden relief rolls.

Haying in the old style does not faze these old-timers, members of a Jewish farm settlement near Albany, N. Y.



There was no general flight from farms. The Society firmly believes that fewer Jews were driven off farms during these lean years than out of city jobs, city businesses and city homes.

The depression changed the attitude of many toward the man who combines farming with an auxiliary activity. In agricultural circles part time farmers had had a lower standing than full time farmers. Even federal agencies in general did not include such farmers in their loaning programs. During the depression, however, the part time farmer began to be looked upon not with scorn, but with envy. For the Society part time farming was not new. It had long regarded the practice as a good means of establishing those who for one reason or another were not ready to launch immediately into full time farming. A supplementary activity gives the new man a chance to develop his farm gradually and provides a cushion against unforeseen contingencies. It is estimated that in some New England states more than half of all farmers now have some non-agricultural source of income. Some successful full time farmers have travelled this intermediate route.

In the middle of the nineteen twenties part time farming appealed increasingly to Jewish city workers of moderate means and agro-industrial settlements grew up in New Brunswick, Chatham, and Plainfield, New Jersey and in the vicinity of Peekskill, New York. To promote this type of project, the Society helped build up an agro-industrial settlement at Bound Brook, New Jersey. By 1930 there were forty families there and fourteen others had bought land preparatory to embarking later. A few had already become sufficiently adjusted to give up outside work. Encouraged by this progress, the Society, in 1929, decided to launch a project embodying the salient features of the Bound Brook plan. It bought a tract of land on the outskirts of New Brunswick, sub-divided it, erected farm buildings and sold the units at cost and on small down payments. An initial group of nine families was settled. The agro-industrialists had hardly had a chance to become oriented



A degree from the State Agricultural College did not deter this corn planter from resuming work on the parental farm, one of the very best in the upper portions of the Hudson River Valley.

Filling up the power-driven potato sprayer are father and son who combine the production of tubers with the raising of broadleaf tobacco in northern Connecticut.

when the economic storm broke forth. Most lost their city jobs, the hub of the plan. The wages of others were drastically reduced. Some had to give up. Others, however, managed to struggle through. For them the small farm proved a boon providing a source of income, even if little, to help tide over the trying period. The Society had hoped to build more farms of this type when conditions returned to normal. Other demands—specifically the refugee problem—made resumption impossible.

It is still the Society's conviction that the principle is sound even though the cost of the undertaking to the Society was heavy. It is to be regretted that the agro-industrial plan did not get a fair trial. With the brightening of the general scene, both Bound Brook and New Brunswick experienced a revival. Some of the survivors are now full fledged, well established farmers, and fresh recruits have settled there.

The Society holds that the family farm is the backbone of American agriculture. It is opposed to a system of farming which, while euphemistically termed cooperative, is in reality collectivistic and lacks the voluntary motif of free persons working together for a common end. The experience of early Jewish colonization efforts and of later resettlement projects—governmental among them—has strengthened the Society's conviction that the average American wants to be possessor of his own farmstead, be it ever so modest or burdened with debt.

But the Society has always been a consistent advocate of those



forms of cooperation which promote the common weal and yet leave individual ownership unfettered. Even before the United States Department of Agriculture set up a bureau to promote cooperative undertakings, the Society had fostered cooperatives, assisted in their formation and extended credit. As early as 1901, the Society lent \$2200 to help buy threshing equipment for the common use of a group of twelve North Dakota farmers—a form of cooperation which was the forerunner of the “Community Service Loan” adopted more than thirty years later by New Deal farm agencies. The principle implicit in that early and simple form of cooperation was later expanded into cooperative activities embracing creameries, bull associations, canneries, buying and marketing cooperatives, credit unions, and a chain of fire insurance companies. Now the Society has contact with associations in Connecticut, California, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Ohio. Although the foundations were generally laid by Jews, the aggregate membership, because of preponderance of numbers, is largely non-Jewish. Since the farm cooperative has primarily an economic function touching alike all farmers in a given community, cooperative activity must be carried on along non-sectarian lines.

The Society's role has been to do the preliminary educational work, to help organize, to give counsel and to act as liaison link between cooperatives and governmental agencies.

The Society had just about emerged from the depression when a new and taxing responsibility was thrust upon it, the problem of rehabilitating through farming many refugees who fled here after the coming of Hitler to power. The new immigrants were for the most part educated men and women who had achieved solid status in Germany, who had established reputations, possessed specialized skills and, before exile forced them out, a measure of wealth. They arrived here with limited or no funds. Their harrowing experience had left deep psychological scars. In their efforts at readjustment, some turned to farming, the result of a new wisdom and understanding, of a craving for life on the land to soothe their wounded spirits, to regain their self respect in a gainful and dignified calling.

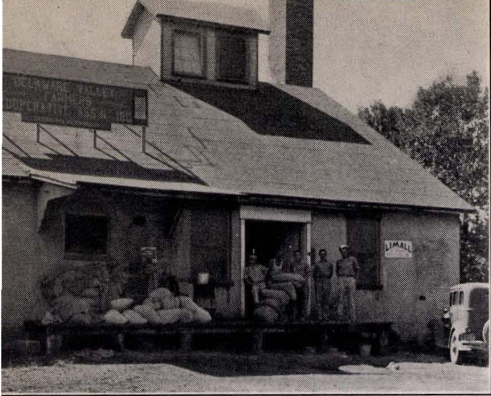
In the beginning the number of refugees seeking to settle on the land was small. By the end of 1937 only 173 refugee applicants



Everybody in the family is busy in the Connecticut Valley tobacco belt when the crop is ready to be "topped." Father and mother were bred on farms in the same locality.

had been registered. Thereafter numbers began to mount. At first the problem centered almost wholly around exiles from Germany, but with the spread of Nazism, it came to embrace emigres from practically every country in Europe and from transit countries on all continents. Among the refugees were some cattle dealers and a few farmers. Some had made their way to the Society's office directly from the steamer. Others had been in the country for some time and had tried their luck at city ventures which proved unsuccessful. Still others were holding petty jobs and were gradually eating up the small remnants of their salvaged capital. All, even those able to finance their farms on their own steam, needed counsel and guidance. To them, transplantation to a farm in the United States meant adjustment to a new economic standard, orientation to a different social order, the complete rebuilding of life on an entirely new pattern.

The majority of refugees have settled on poultry farms. This was a matter of practical necessity, not of choice. The Society prefers more diversified farming, but experience has proven that poultry is best suited to the inexperienced newcomer. While the poultryman must be constantly on the job, the work is not as taxing physically as, for instance, dairying. This is an important consideration for people, some no longer young, who have not done much manual labor. The family sized poultry farm can in most instances be run by members of the family with little or no paid



A cooperatively owned and operated feed distributing plant, one of several the J.A.S. has helped to establish.

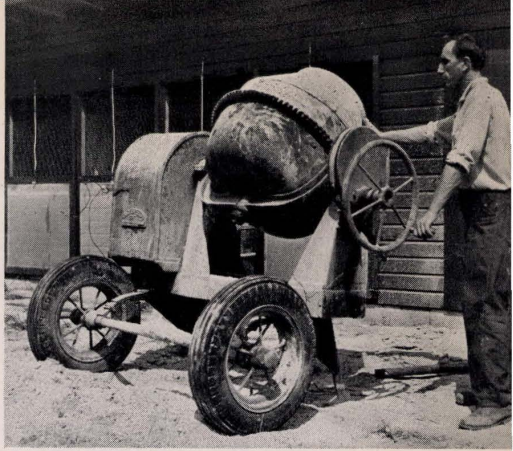
help. Refugee cattle dealers, with few exceptions, went to dairy farms.

As refugee activity developed, it became evident that some preliminary training should be given these bewildered and floundering emigres before encouraging them to go forth. To that end the Society established the Refugee Training Farm near Bound Brook, New Jersey. The plan was to give a short, intensive course, just enough to acquaint the trainees with the rudiments of a few branches of farming and to give them a taste of farm life. Only those were accepted who had resources with which to buy farms or at least to qualify for loans from the Society, those who could put their training to practical and constructive use. Ages ranged from 16 to 63 and refugees of Christian faith were accepted. After our entry into the war, refugee activity slackened and enrollment in the training farm fell. The farm was closed at the end of 1942. During the three years of its existence 317 refugees spent periods ranging from one week to eight in training there. At its discontinuance 144 "graduates" had been established on farms of their own. Eighteen were holding farm jobs. No doubt more settled later.

Since the enactment of the Displaced Persons Law of 1948, a new angle of the refugee problem faces the Society. DPs are coming to the Society's offices. They differ from the earlier refugees in that they are younger and stronger. They had to be to escape consignment to Nazi crematoria. Most are penniless. It is a laudable comment on Jewish generosity that some have relatives, close or distant, or friends willing to stake them to substantial sums. A goodly number had had some contact with farming in concentration and DP camps.

DPs have learned through tough and congested camp life to live together. There is, therefore, more than the usual tendency toward partnership. They see in partnership a social advantage,

At the concrete mixer is a recent immigrant, from a D.P. center, who was completing at the time his modern poultry plant in South Jersey.



the comfort of sharing responsibility, the pooling of resources, without which many could have no access to the farm. Yet compelling as these considerations may appear, the Society opposes, as it always has, farm partnership. Experience has proven that the so-called advantages are more than nullified by the weaknesses inherent in a venture which is not only a business carried on by the heads, but a mode of living in which all members of the families are thrown together into close contact, where, therefore, clashes of temperament may occur. The Society can, nevertheless make no hard and fast rule against partnerships.

By the end of 1949, 6,061 refugees, including DPs had come to the Society's offices. Approximately 14,000 individual consultations had been held and 750 families settled on farms in California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Virginia. Of the 750 families 660 or 88% are according to report still on their farms, a record which needs no comment. Loans in the amount of \$1,126,398 were made directly by the JAS, \$108,734 was lent by the United Service for New Americans, \$20,150 by other agencies. Of the \$1,255,282 total \$707,740 has already been repaid, again a record which needs no comment.

The fifty year span in the life of the Society witnessed periods of calm and periods of stress, periods of expansion and periods of contraction. There was the formative period, a time of exploration and experimentation. There was the period of sustained growth, when the Society reached out into wider fields, a growth interrupted temporarily by World War I. Then came a period of greater expansion, cruelly halted by a ruinous depression. Barely had we emerged from the slough when a problem, painful

in its implications and insistent in its demands, was thrust upon the Society, the refugee problem. While yet engrossed in perfecting the techniques of the new reconstruction task, the most devastating war in all history broke forth with lightning speed and furious destruction.

The war placed a mighty responsibility upon the shoulders of American farmers which they cheerfully accepted and heroically discharged. Like their fellow farmers, Jewish farmers toiled and sweated. Like their fellow Americans, they threw themselves unsparingly into every phase of the war. On the home front they gave unstintingly of themselves and of their substance. There was no phase of war activity in which they, their wives and their children did not engage. They bought war bonds, joined state guards, became fire wardens, air raid wardens. They gave blood to the Red Cross. Their synagogues and community houses became centers for all kinds of war activities. Young Jews from the farm, in some instances two or three from the same family, served on land, on sea, and in the air, in all theatres of operation as enlisted or drafted men, in all ranks from ordinary seaman and buck private to commissioned officer. Jewish farm girls became WACS and WAVES and Red Cross nurses. Some of these young folks never returned. Some received awards reaching to Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Service Cross, and other high honors.

The Society marshalled its every resource, geared its last effort to help Jewish farmers add their bit to the nation's food bin.

The Society placed its Refugee Training Farm, heretofore referred to, and its facilities at the disposal of the New York City Board of Education for the training of high school boys on a non-

sectarian basis at the Society's cost. It also joined with city and state agencies in sponsoring centers under the Victory Farm Cadet Training Program. To



With nerves shattered from mistreatment by Nazi persecution, this turkey grower in eastern Massachusetts is rapidly acquiring a high reputation for his strain of White Holland birds.

keep the farmer's plant functioning, the Society's extension head had to ferret out sources of equipment and material and to dig up substitutes when the usual commodities were not available. The educational department had to help make existing machinery serve and to resort to home made improvisations. In a sense the Society had to bring about changes in the farmer's ways of thinking. The problem was to produce a lot with little, to strive to mobilize man power and resources so that no minute, move or material would be wasted.

In conjunction with the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Society gathered statistics pertaining to Jewish farm men and women in the armed services. A representative cross section was taken as a base. The findings showed that the ratio of Jewish farm boys and girls in service was practically the same as the general ratio.

From what has already been written it is clear that the Society's objective is to make more and better Jewish farmers. Because the Society never engaged in fund raising with its attendant publicity, neither its own work nor the cause in which it labors received that notice which both should command. Until very recently the Society was content to reach the potential Jewish farmer through the Yiddish press and other media. For the outside world it published an annual report for circulation among a selected few. But the Society became convinced that casual and unplanned publicity was not enough to bring to farm aspirants the knowledge of the existence of a guiding agency. The Society became convinced, also, that a greater awareness on the part of the American public of

Lately from a D.P. camp, this former student of a rabbinical seminary is centering his attention on corn, hay and such, on the family farm in eastern New Jersey.





A former tailor—at home with up-to-date equipment on his irrigated truck farm in the suburbs of Milwaukee, Wis.

the fact that there is a segment of Jews actively and constructively engaged in farming would act as fine leaven in the cause of better understanding between Jew and Christian.

The first step in the expanded public relations program was to make wider use of the Society's annual report and to enlarge its circulation. This brought forth editorial comment and special stories. Several publications sent their men to Jewish farm districts to write feature articles, some with illustrations. Following a trip by a staff writer of *The Jewish Daily Forward*, the editor instituted a weekly question and answer column on farming which is being conducted by the head of the Society's Farm Settlement Department. Articles dealing with the Society's work in general or some specific phase of it have appeared in practically every Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish paper, in Protestant and Catholic periodicals, in agricultural, social service, veteran, and labor publications.

In 1943 the book, *OUR JEWISH FARMERS*, written by the Managing Director, made its appearance. The work sets forth the story of forty years of the Society's activity, gives an account of early Jewish colonization in the United States and a panoramic view of the Jewish farm scene. The book received favorable comment in hundreds of publications—daily, weekly and monthly—throughout the land. A story based on it was released by the Common Council for American Unity to publications printed in twenty-four foreign languages, reaching nine million readers. The observance of the completion of forty years of service by the Society's Managing Director afforded a fine opportunity to make public the Society's work and achievement. The *JEWISH FORUM* devoted an entire issue to the occasion. Leaders in American life, Jewish and non-Jewish, contributed articles.

The Managing Director was co-sponsor with the Rt. Rev. Msgr. L. G. Ligutti of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference and Dr. Benson Y. Landis of the Federal Council of The Churches of Christ in America in the issuance of a thought provoking socio-economic statement, "Man's Relation to the Land."

Formerly an egg buyer in New York, the operator of the grain combine raises several hundred acres of flax and wheat in Minnesota.



Among the signatories were the Society's president and the presidents of three Jewish theological institutions.

A unique observance, Agricultural Sabbath, promulgated in 1946 by the Synagogue Council of America at the request of the Society, has become an established institution in American Jewish life. The rabbinate in America is requested to preach sermons relating to Jewish farmers in the United States.

A photographic exhibit composed of pictures portraying the progress of Jewish farmers in various parts of the country was produced and arranged by the Society's extension head. It was shown in centers throughout New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, in Newark and Passaic, New Jersey, Rochester, New York; Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Kenosha, Wisconsin; at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. Under the aegis of the National Jewish Welfare Board it was displayed at U.S.O. centers in Texas and Louisiana. It was placed on view at the University of Connecticut dur-



The figure in the center of the vast field is a second generation producer of certified potato seed at the tip of Aroostock County, Maine, near the Canadian border.

ing an annual farm and home week. Pictures from the Society's display were included in an exhibit promoted by the Council Against Intolerance in America.

A motion picture depicting the life and work on farms was made by the Society's extension head to show how far some Jewish farmers have advanced in methods, techniques and mode of living. Some of these scenes were included in the motion picture "Of These Our People," dealing with Jewish life in America, a picture which was widely circulated among libraries, schools, colleges and universities.

On the Pacific Coast, the Society's head at Los Angeles made a movie depicting California farming. The American Economic Committee for Palestine later enlisted that office's cooperation in making a more elaborate movie for the benefit of Jewish poultry farmers in Palestine. RKO produced the picture, which is also being used in the United States.

Radio broadcasts by branch and division heads in the east, midwest and Pacific Coast spread news of the movement to audiences far and wide. A broadcast in the Eternal Light series under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America dramatized the life story of Jacob Karlin, a leading farmer on Long Island. The address following the broadcast was delivered by the Society's Managing Director.

Members of the staff, including the settlement head's wife, a former member, were called upon to speak in synagogues, temples, community centers, lodge rooms; to address village and town boards, medical societies and health associations, veteran's groups, DP and refugee gatherings, women's clubs and Christian bodies — Catholic and Protestant—to participate in interfaith discussions; in short,



As a boy on his father's farm this potato and tobacco grower had to share a pair of shoes with several other members of the family. At present he operates several farms in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The ultra-modern incubator house a graduate in civil engineering built in a region of New York state in which many a native had found farming unprofitable.

in assemblages interested in the agricultural, religious, social, educational and civic phases of American rural economy.

While the Society was building its machinery and refining its instruments the better to serve its own clientele, not a few of its techniques and practices were adopted by other agencies, even state and federal. A brief review. The Society created what was in a sense the first "farmers bank" in America. Its then executive head collaborated in drafting the first Federal Farm Loan Act and became the first president of the Federal Land Bank having jurisdiction over the New England states, New York and New Jersey. The Society was among the pioneers in the evolution of the agricultural credit union and some of its recommendations became recognized credit practice embodied in later credit union legislation. The Society set up the first specialized farm employment agency and founded one of the first farm papers in America to be published in a foreign language. Its system of field instruction, antedated by seven or eight years legislation establishing country agent work. And the Society early engaged in planned farm settlement activity. Recognizing the value of such service, Governor Franklin Roosevelt's Agricultural Commission established a Bureau of Farm Information modelled on similar lines. The Society's Managing Director was consulted in the planning of the bureau and was appointed a member of its advisory committee. The plan of the Farm Security Administration, now the Farmers Home Administration, is in a broad sense also akin to the Society's settlement work.

What has been accomplished in these fifty years? First and foremost, the Society has been responsible for the establishment of some scores of thousands of Jewish families on their own farms where they can work with pride and a feeling of personal freedom that springs from possession, and the dignity that comes from the consciousness that they are the molders of their own destinies. The Society does not claim sole credit for building up Jewish farm



settlements in the United States, but the fact is that the growth of the Jewish farm movement in the United States coincides with the Society's life, and it is significant that this growth took place during the very period in American history when the trend was in the opposite direction, from farm to city. The Society does claim, however, that it gave the movement guidance and direction and the impetus toward wholesome and healthy growth. And the Society also claims a share in the building of flourishing Jewish farm communities.

It is significant that the Society's fiftieth year was the most active in its history. More people came for counsel, more came for farm settlement guidance, more families were settled on farms, and a greater volume of farm loans was approved than in any of the previous forty-nine years.

It is always in place to pause and evaluate. What is the virtue of a Jewish farm movement? What is the importance of placing Jews on farms? What is the significance of building Jewish farm communities? Is it to add to the country's food supply? Is it to scotch the myth that Jews have neither the desire nor the aptitude for farming? Is it to demonstrate that Jews can till and toil and derive joy therefrom? Is it to relieve city congestion, even if only in a small way? Is it to diversify Jewish occupational composition? Is

it to mitigate, even in small measure, anti-Jewish prejudice. It is all this. It is more. The Jewish farmer is the exemplar of a new way of life. True, he goes to the farm for the material and spiritual satisfactions which he hopes to derive, but that very act creates for him a new responsibility. By the degree in which he succeeds or fails will the capacity of the Jew for farming be judged. The successful Jewish farmer is a beacon to light the way for those who want to follow.



"Sweet are the diversities" of farming, one could say, when beekeeping is combined with poultry raising, as is done by this central Jersey old-timer.

Jewish agrarians are growing in number, adding to their acres and making their contribution to American husbandry. The stronger the agricultural base of American Israel, the stronger will be the house resting upon it.

As the Society crosses the threshold from its first half century to the next, it renews its pledge that it will go forward with the vigor, the enthusiasm and the spirit of youth, mellowed and matured by the experience, the knowledge and the understanding wrought by the years; that it will continue to march with courage and conviction in the performance of the unique and constructive task to which it is dedicated.

The record here set down was made possible only because the Society was fortunate in having had on its Directorate, from the beginning and throughout the years, able leaders, practical, big hearted, far sighted men. There were Eugene S. Benjamin, Cyrus

In the highly specialized field of plant propagation, this trained agriculturist (right), enjoys a high reputation. His hobby is collecting rare copies of Hebrew books.



L. Sulzberger, Alfred Jaretzki, Sr., Percy S. Straus, Morris Loeb, Jacob G. Lipman, Eugene Meyer, Sr., Solomon G. Rosenbaum, all of whom have gone to the Great Beyond. Of the living, special tribute should be paid to Lewis L. Strauss, Honorary President, who, on the Society's birthday, will have rounded out thirty years of devoted service, and to Reuben Arkush, Honorary Director, a valued member of the Board for twenty-six years until his retirement at the ripe age of eighty-eight.

I want to hail, also, the President, the officers and the members of our present Board, whose interest, encouragement and labor eased my path.

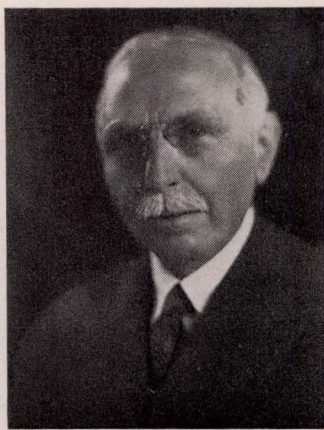
Thanks go likewise to my loyal and cooperative staff.

GABRIEL DAVIDSON,
Managing Director

December 31, 1949.



**J.A.S. Honorary President
ADMIRAL LEWIS L. STRAUSS**



**J.A.S. Honorary Director
REUBEN ARKUSH**

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