

# The Yiddish of Yankeeland

*The Jews of Boston and America, 1840–1924*

Class 3: Jews and the Boston Machine, 1891–1914

Dr. Aaron Welt

November 16, 2021



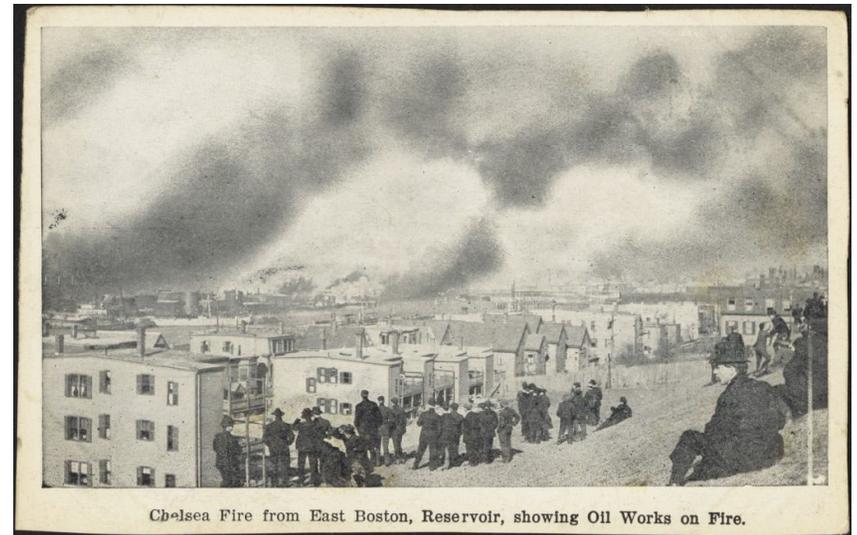
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# The Yiddish of Yankeeland

Nov. 16, 2021



Chelsea Fire from East Boston, Reservoir, showing Oil Works on Fire.



# Jewish Women in Gilded Age Boston



- Impact of the Haskalah/Reform Judaism and the Emergence of the *Maskilot*
- The Important Role of Charity and Education in the Advancement of Women in American Society
- Lina Hecht (1848 – 1921)
  - Emerges as Major Leader and Visionary in Boston's Charities
  - Hebrew Ladies Sewing Circle
  - Hebrew Sunday School System in Boston
  - Settlement Houses – Hebrew Industrial School for Girls (HISG) and Hecht Neighborhood Home
- Golde Bamber (1862 – 1951) – Important Role of Education and Expertise in Modern Philanthropy
- 1895 Formation of Federation of Boston Charities a Model for Jewish Philanthropy for Other Cities

## “Mrs. Hecht’s Vision”

Miss Abrams: Yes, my dear, but here at Dorchester we have been able, through the encouragement and assistance of the Trustees and the Associated Jewish Philanthropies, to follow Mrs. Hecht's aim of linking up all the House activities not only with the ideals of American democracy but also with the ideals of our Jewish heritage.

(Pages rise and reveal Picture #10)

*Eli Eli Solo*  
Picture #10--160 American Legion Highway, Judiasm and Democracy--Two raised figures in Syabolic Costumes -- America (Picture #1) and a figure holding Torah and Menorah. All children who have passed into book massed before these figures.

Shirley: I wonder what will be put in these empty pages of the scrapbook.

Miss Abrams: It is up to us to decide what the future holds and to make the succeeding pages as fine a tribute to the vision of Lina Hecht as the earlier ones have been.

Lil: Miss Abrams, tell us what Mrs. Hecht's hope was for the House.

Miss Abrams: Mrs. Hecht's vision was a beautiful one. What she wanted most was a constant growth and expansion of the ideals of the House. What I mean is that she foresaw the need of other houses in other neighborhoods--all founded on the same ideal, to help our youth to be better Americans and better Jews.

“Hebrew  
Industrial  
School,” *Lend  
a Hand* by  
Golde Bamber  
(1895)

The Hebrew Industrial School of Boston opened its doors to meet the special requirements of the children of the Hebrew poor who crowded to our shores.

The originator of this work was Mr. J. H. Hecht, a wise and generous philanthropist, who felt that these children must be placed in touch, as quickly as possible, with their adopted country; and be given such an education as would enable them to refute in person all prejudice arising from differences of thought, speech, or habits.

Commencing with twenty pupils and five teachers, the school has now three hundred and forty-six pupils, a superintendent, two paid teachers, and twenty-two voluntary teachers. Within the last four years one thousand children have been properly and systematically taught to become wage-earners, bread-winners, and self-respecting, intelligent citizens. The number of applicants is always greater than can be accommodated, and only a building devoted entirely to the purpose of industrial training, will enable us to accept the children of the many disappointed parents who leave us reluctantly, urging us to find room for “just one more.” If the public realized as do the parents, the value of this moral and industrial training, we would have such a building, where we might attain the true measure of usefulness, and extend the good influence far and wide.

GOLDE BAMBER.

## "Russians in Boston," *Lend a Hand* by Golde Bamber (1892)

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LEND A HAND.

In another alley at the South End I found an unhappy woman, lying sick in bed; nobody to prepare food for her or her children, who were too small to be of any assistance. The little ones, four in number, were huddled in a corner, almost naked. A lady physician in attendance had kindly furnished medicine, and begged me to send a nurse to the poor creature, who had almost perished for lack of care.

Further down town I found another woman, lying on a hard mattress, with her new-born baby, scarcely any covering, and dependent for food upon neighbors almost as poor as herself. In both of these cases the husbands were trying to earn their daily bread. One had been obliged to leave the city, after repeated efforts to find work, and was peddling stationery in the neighboring towns.

In spite of willing hearts and hands, these cases are so numerous that it seems well-nigh impossible to relieve all the misery. Some of these homes are not models of cleanliness, but it is not to be wondered at. Consider that in Russia these unfortunates have been driven into the foulest quarters of the cities, herded together like animals. If, by chance, one family made a brave showing, they were thought to be too well off; the cupidity of some petty officer was aroused and everything was seized. It was better to conceal every appearance of tidiness and comfort. Thus these people lost their regard for appearances and were degraded.

But arouse their self-respect; let them feel that America offers the same opportunities to all, rich and poor; give them time to assimilate American ideas, then note the change, not only in their homes, but in their very carriage. After visiting the hovels of those immigrants who have just landed in a strange country, degraded and humiliated by the wrongs inflicted by their native land, go into the tidy, cheerful homes of those whose children have attended the public schools for six months or a year.

### HEBREW IMMIGRATION.

THE pressure of religious and social persecution has driven large numbers of Hebrews from Russia, and, very naturally, a considerable portion of this emigration has arrived in this country. We have had occasion once and again to notice the intelligent efforts made by Hebrew gentlemen of the first character and position in New York and Boston, to meet this wave, and to prepare for the unfortunate persons who are thus compelled to change their home. In Boston, alone, we received more than two thousand Jews from Russia in the course of the last year. An intelligent and active committee attends immediately to their needs, has provided an industrial school for them, and takes such measures as it can for the purpose of distributing them in the interior of the country. The old motto, "Stimulate the absorbents," is always appropriate in handling large numbers of immigrants from abroad, and is especially important here.

**QUESTIONS?**  
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# The Jewish Diaspora From Eastern Europe, 1881 - 1917

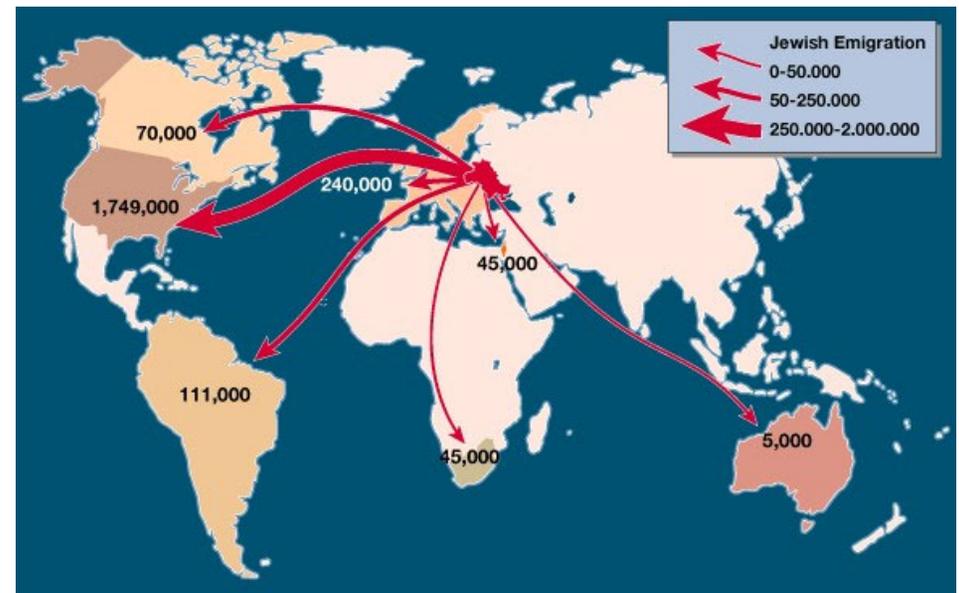
- Mass Migration of Eastern European Jews who Leave Czarist Russia, the Kingdom of Romania, Austro-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire
- Czarina Catherine the Great's Annexation of Poland, Creation of the Pale of Settlement in Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- Life in the Jewish Pale of Settlement
  - Multicultural – Jews Live Among Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Germans and Others
  - Highly Religious – Religious Authorities Given Political Power; Seat of Power For Long Established Religious Institutions and Hasidic Sects; View of America as "*Treyfa Medina*" ("Unkosher Land"). Jews Viewed as Religious Outsiders
  - Jews Economic Middlemen Facing Severe Limitations on Mobility and Commercial Opportunity – Jews Largely Poor
  - Literary Culture Revolves Around Yiddish Language. Opponents View Yiddish as Degraded "Jargon" Language
  - Jewish Population of 5 Million By 1900





# Empires of Europe (1900)

# The Russian Pale of Settlement





## The Jewish Diaspora From Eastern Europe

- Jews in Austro-Hungary Emancipated, But Many Poor Jews Live in Underdeveloped Region of Galicia
  - Transformations of Eastern European Jewish Economy – Emancipation of Russian Serfs; Construction of Railroads; Upending of Jewish “Middleman Role”
    - Pogroms in Kingdom of Romania, 1866
- Assassination of Czar Alexander II By Norodnia Volia (People’s Will) and Spate of Pogroms in 1880s
- Violent Crackdown on Anti-Czarist Protests Over, 1905 – 1907
  - Mass Migration Again Linked to Economic Opportunities
    - Migration of No Return





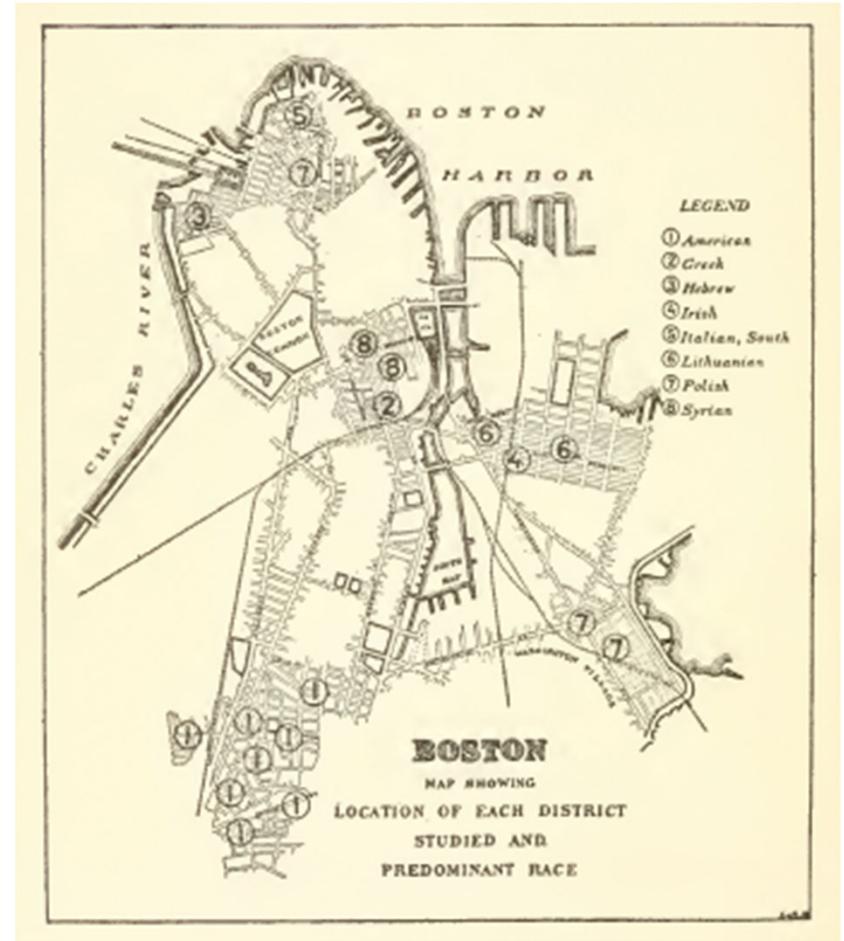
## Trans-Atlantic Immigrants in Steerage



East End Immigrant Processing Station (Early 1920s)

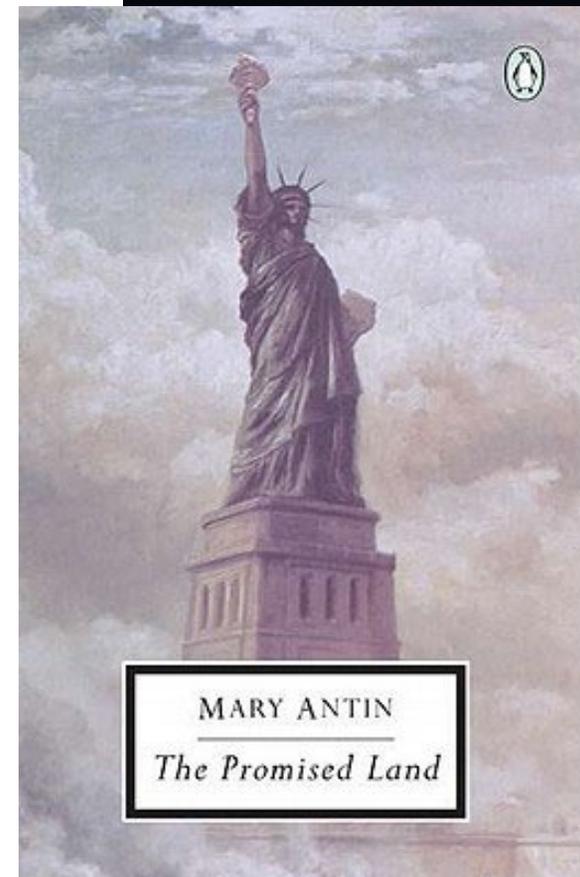
# New Jewish Immigrant Neighborhoods in Boston

- Jewish Immigrants in South End and, Increasingly, the North and West End Neighborhoods
- Continued Importance of Jewish Ethnic Economy in Ready-to-Wear, Shoes, and Retail
- New Jewish Advances into Finance: Abraham Ratshesky (United Trust Company), Julius Rottenberg (Universal Banking House), and Kevie Carmen



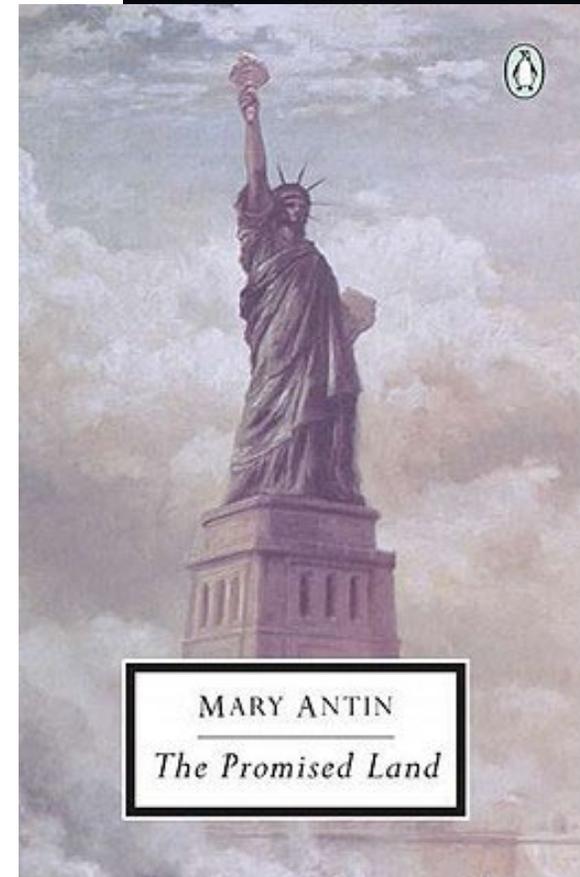
## *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin

- “Anybody who knows Boston knows that the West and North Ends are the wrong ends of that city. They form the tenement district, or, in the newer phrase, the slums of Boston. Anybody who is acquainted with the slums of any American metropolis knows that that is the quarter where poor immigrants foregather, to live, for the most part, as unkempt, half-washed, toiling, unaspiring foreigners; pitiful in the eyes of social missionaries, the despair of boards of health, the hope of ward politicians, the touchstone of American democracy. The well-versed metropolitan knows the slums as a sort of house of detention for poor aliens, where they live on probation till they can show a certificate of good citizenship.
- He may know all this and yet not guess how Wall Street, in the West End, appears in the eyes of a little immigrant from Polotzk. What would the sophisticated sight-seer say about Union Place, off Wall Street, where my new home waited for me? He would say that it is no place at all, but a short box of an alley. Two rows of three-story tenements are its sides, a stingy strip of sky is its lid, a littered pavement is the floor, and a narrow mouth its exit.”



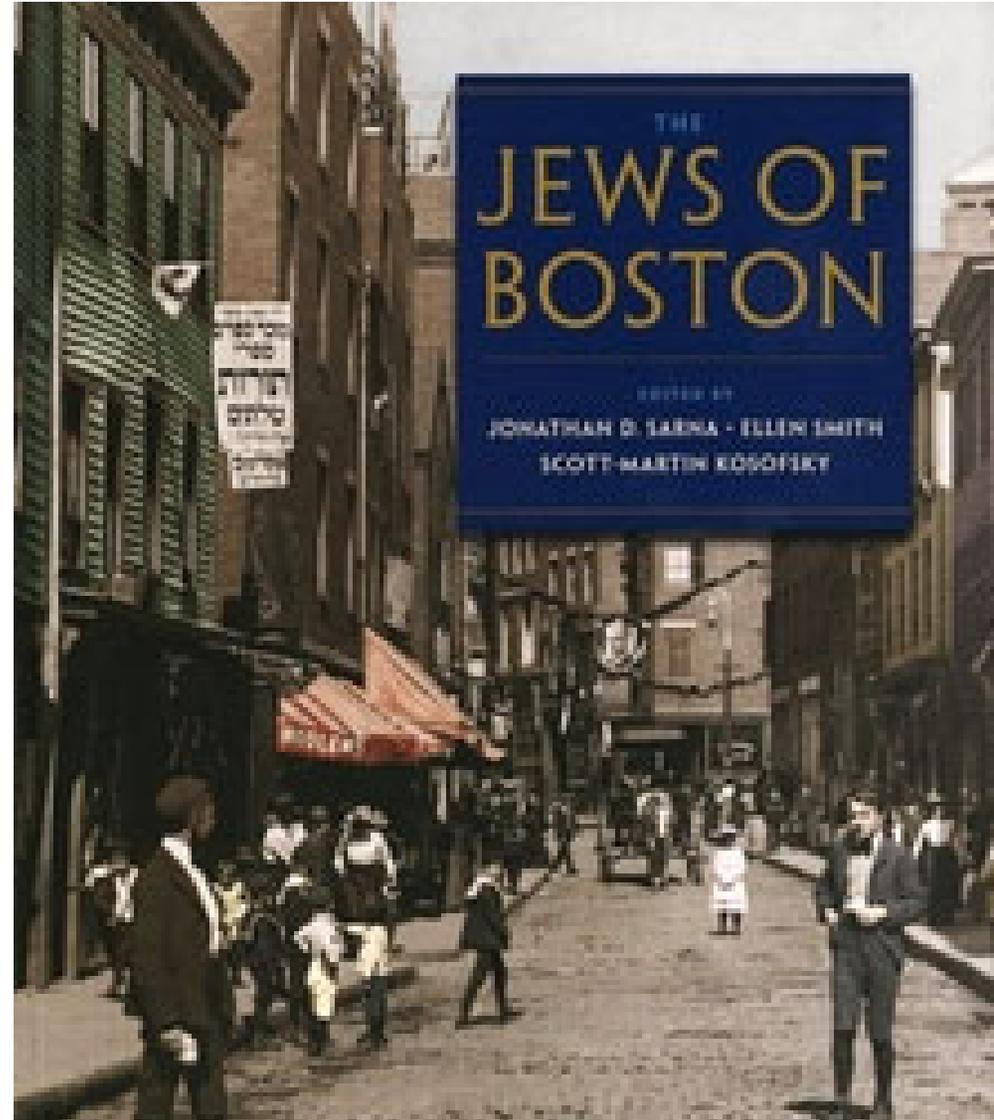
## *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin

- “In our days of affluence in Russia we had been accustomed to upholstered parlors, embroidered linen, silver spoons and candlesticks, goblets of gold, kitchen shelves shining with copper and brass. We had featherbeds heaped halfway to the ceiling; we had clothes presses dusky with velvet and silk and fine woollen. The three small rooms into which my father now ushered us, up one flight of stairs, contained only the necessary beds, with lean mattresses; a few wooden chairs; a table or two; a mysterious iron structure, which later turned out to be a stove; a couple of unornamental kerosene lamps; and a scanty array of cooking-utensils and crockery. And yet we were all impressed with our new home and its furniture. It was not only because we had just passed through our seven lean years, cooking in earthen vessels, eating black bread on holidays and wearing cotton; it was chiefly because these wooden chairs and tin pans were American chairs and pans that they shone glorious in our eyes. And if there was anything lacking for comfort or decoration we expected it to be presently supplied – at least, we children did. Perhaps my mother alone, of us newcomers, appreciated the shabbiness of the little apartment, and realized that for her there was as yet no laying down of the burden of poverty.”



## *The Jews of Boston*

- With their arrival in Boston, the new Russian immigrants faced the immediate necessity of making a living. The majority found such opportunities in Boston's well-developed textile and shoe industries, a segment of the economy previously entered into by Central European Jewish immigrants. But success in the clothing business was not limited to 'German' Jews. Indeed it was the success of these first Jews in Boston that made it possible for Russian Jews to peddle, accumulate capital, and then open their own small stores. It was also the Russian Jews who carried out most of the skilled and unskilled labor upon which the larger clothing manufacturers depended.
- Part of the Reason for the economic success of many Russian Jews was their ability to position themselves in sectors of clothing industry that others had either overlooked or consciously avoided because of the unpleasantness and low status of the work. Benjamin Feinberg and his sons, for example, cornered the market in the wool rag business. Feinberg was born in Pliskov, Russia, in 1840 and worked in the cattle business. ... With his old world skill of cattle dealing useless, Benjamin Feinberg worked as a rag picker with his son William. He received three dollars a week, barely enough to pay for rent and food for a family of eight. Other sons brought home additional funds by sorting woolen clippings for clothing manufacturers. When Benjamin had felt he had learned the rag business, he hired a shop in an old engine fire house and 'started to prosper from the beginning.' ... In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all of the brothers combined their businesses and formed B. Feinberg and Sons, which soon became New England's premier rag business." (pgs. 69 - 71)



**QUESTIONS?**  
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# Evrio Hebrew School Building, 31 North Russell St. in the West End

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# Jewish Institutions in the West End



## Jewish Immigrant Activism in Gilded Age Boston

- 1902 Kasher Meat Boycott
- Jewish Garment Worker Unions and the Campaign Against the Sweatshop – Philip Davis and Henry Abrams
- Class Conflict in Jewish Boston But Far Less Than in New York – Model of the Filenes
- Larger Role of Jewish Labor and Immigrant Activism on American Jewish/Boston Jewish History

### **KOSHER MEAT RIOT IN BOSTON.**

**Stores Bombarded by Hebrews and Police Charge Crowds, Arresting the Ringleaders.**

Boston, Mass., May 22.—“Kasher meat” disturbances started in the West End section of this city today. Three hundred Hebrews—men, women, and children—assembled in front of a meat store on Brighton street and threw eggs and decayed fruit at the building. The windows were smashed and the stock of meats ruined. The police arrested two women and one man. A woman was injured during the stampede. Later crowds attacked two meat stores in the North End, smashed the windows, and spoiled the stock.

## Jewish Immigrant Activism in Boston

### **POLICE GUARD BOSTON SHOPS.**

#### **Sixteen Hebrews Who Took Part in Riots Brought Up in Court and Fined.**

Sullivan in the Municipal Court. Fourteen, charged with loitering and obstructing travel, were fined \$3 each; Sarah Goldstein, for hitting an unknown man and a policeman with a piece of meat, was fined \$5, and Harry W. Cotton, for maliciously breaking glass in a store, was fined \$10. The fines were paid.

### **TAMMANY'S QUIET DAY.**

#### **The "Three Consuls" Fail to Put in Appearance—Senator Plunkitt's Opinion.**

Tammany Hall was as quiet as a graveyard yesterday. None of the members of

### **BOSTON GARMENT MAKERS ON A STRIKE.**

#### **Two Thousand of Them Have a Grievance and All Walk Out.**

Boston, Mass., Sept. 20.—Acting upon the Every man, woman, and child responded to the call to stop work. Many of the contractors have a large amount of work half finished and heavy orders ahead, and a number have already made application to sign the new agreement.

FALL RIVER, Mass., Sept. 20.—Notwithstanding the refusal of the management of the Zuconnet mills to promise a restoration of the old scale of wages and the announcement that for the present the mills would be operated under the reduction, nearly all the operatives there returned to work today. At a mass-meeting of the striking weavers this morning it was decided to pay all strikers one-half of the regular strike allowance for one week longer.

### **NEGROES MAY BE GOING TO THEIR DOOM.**

#### **They Are Hired for Massillon (O.) Mines and Trouble May Ensur.**

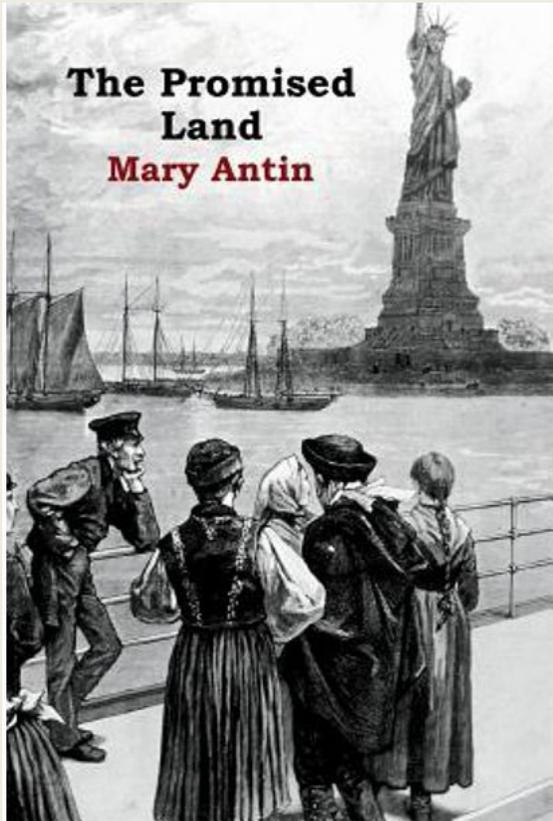
BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Sept. 20.—[Special.]—Labor agents are here securing negroes in large numbers to go to the Massillon (O.) district to take the places of striking white miners. Three hundred negroes left tonight and 700 or 800 more are expected to follow soon. The negroes have been promised steady work and good wages and are evidently unacquainted with the situation of affairs there, as it is said serious trouble is expected at Mas-

Joseph  
Barondess  
Flees to  
Boston

... of violating the law, in that they failed to keep posted in a conspicuous place in their vehicles the legal rates of fare and the name and license number of the owner, have been investigated by Mayor's Marshal Engelhard, who has made a report to the Mayor. The report declares that while the hackmen believed they were not violating the law by concealing the cards on which the rates were printed, because passengers often destroyed or carried them off, the Marshal was convinced to the contrary. He recommended that the licenses of ten hackmen who failed to appear should not be renewed until they made satisfactory explanation.

Four more, who failed to appear or to answer questions put to them, he regarded as unfit persons to drive cabs and recommended that their licenses be revoked. They are Matthew Morrison of 330 East Twenty-second Street, license 1,246; John Reed, 2,120 Eighth Avenue, license 1,631; Thomas Hastings, 241 West Seventy-seventh Street, license 132, and John Riordan, 263 West Thirtieth Street, license 1,644. Mayor Grant promptly revoked the licenses, and to the ten other delinquents uttered a *ranrimand*.

Mary Antin and *The Promised Land*



**QUESTIONS?**  
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# The Yiddish of Yankeeland

## The Jews of Boston and America, 1840–1924

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### Welcome!

Thank you for registering for the online course, *The Yiddish of Yankeeland: The Jews of Boston and America, 1840–1924!*

This course will explore the Jewish experience of Boston during the era of largescale Jewish immigration to the United States. Long serving as a city of refuge, Boston also emerged as an important hub in the Jewish diaspora to America. By the nineteenth century, Boston offered Jewish immigrants an urban landscape where they could create and build American Jewish culture, start their own businesses, and practice Judaism in the ways they

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