



PROJECT MUSE®

Not Written in Stone

Elazar, Daniel J., Brown, Michael, Robinson, Ira

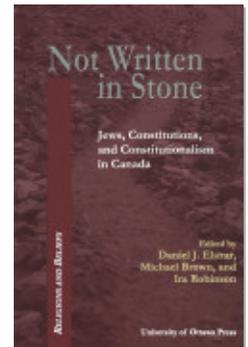
Published by University of Ottawa Press

Elazar, Daniel J., et al.

Not Written in Stone: Jews, Constitutions, and Constitutionalism in Canada.

University of Ottawa Press, 2003.

Project MUSE.muse.jhu.edu/book/6581.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/6581>

Kissing Cousins: The Early History of Congregations Shearith Israel of New York City and Montreal

JAY M. EIDELMAN

New York City's Congregation Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel), the venerable Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, was already an old established congregation when prayers of thanksgiving for the conquest of Canada by His Majesty's forces were offered there in 1760. Not only did the conquest establish British hegemony in North America, it extended the North American Jewish community into what is now Canada. Hoping to capitalize on opportunities in the new territories, some Jewish settlers accompanied the triumphant British forces northward. By 1768, enough Jews had settled in Montreal to establish a congregation. They named it Shearith Israel, after the New York congregation from which many of them had come. The following essay is a comparison of the early histories of both congregations based primarily on their constitutional documents. The essay traces the beginnings of separate Canadian and American Jewish identities against the backdrop of political and social change in early nineteenth-century North America.¹

Legend has it that New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, the mother of all North American congregations, was established in 1654 when twenty-three Jewish souls arrived in New Amsterdam from Recife, Brazil. The Jews came after 'fleeing' the Portuguese who had taken Brazil back from the Dutch. (Recent scholarship has disputed the 1654 founding date and demonstrated that the community was unstable until 1730, which explains why a synagogue was not built until that year.) The year 1654 is nevertheless significant, since the story surrounding the founding of the New York congregation established many of the myths of North America's Jewish community. Here, after all, was a group of so-called refugees escaping religious persecution, victims of the series of expulsions which included the great expulsion

from Spain in 1492. Small wonder, then, that they named their congregation, Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel).²

The earliest constitutional documents available for the New York congregation (1728) place it within the tradition of post-expulsion Sephardi (of Iberian origin) Jewish communities such as London and Amsterdam. A fledgling community with a diverse, sometimes disobedient population needed a forceful, hierarchical form of synagogue governance. The 'Rules and Regulations' established by Shearith Israel had strong provisions against any behaviour that might sully the reputation of the new community. The third rule, for instance, stated that persons who gave "any affront or abuse, either by words or action to any person or persons within the said Sinagog [sic]" would be required to pay a fine of twenty shillings. And lest any quarrel extend beyond closed doors, the fifth regulation governed disputes among the synagogue leaders themselves empowering the disputants to appoint an 'indifferent' trustee to decide the matter.³

The early regulations also sought to obviate any difficulties arising from the arrival of indigent immigrants. If needy Jews came to New York City and demanded assistance from the synagogue, the *parnas* (president) was authorized to provide them with eight shillings per week for a period of no more than twelve weeks. After three months, the *parnas* was to "use his utmost endeavours to dispatch them [the poor] to sum othere [sic] place as soon as Possible assisting them with necessaries, for their Voyage." Aid for single persons was not to exceed forty shillings but no initial restraints were placed on aid to families. The amount would be decided by the *parnas* in consultation with his assistants. The congregation's own poor could apply to the *sedaca* (charity fund) and also would be assisted as the *parnas* and his assistants saw fit.⁴

Caring for the local poor was an established custom in Jewish communities throughout the world, and stipulations concerning 'poor strangers' were common to European Jewish communities. In seventeenth-century New York, self-sufficiency was a condition of Jewish settlement. In both their European and American contexts, regulations of this kind were designed to prevent Jewish communities from being overburdened with 'refugees' from poverty stricken locales. The preservation of a congregation's 'good name' with gentile authorities was undoubtedly also a factor in the creation of this sort of legislation.⁵

The arrival of Jews into the territory that would later become Canada was, in some ways, the opposite of the New York experience: Jews came not as refugees but as conquerors. Forbidden to settle in French

North America, the founders of Canada's permanent Jewish community came with the British forces in 1760. The most famous of these settlers was Aaron Hart, who established large holdings around Trois-Rivières. Others were attracted to the growing British merchant colony centred in Montreal, and by 1768, Jews there had their own congregation. Unfortunately, few documents survive from those first years. Considering the auspicious nature of the community's founding, we may have seen a very different set of rules there from those of other places. Researchers speculate that the earliest regulations of the Montreal synagogue copied those of synagogues in New York and London.⁶

The first incarnation of Montreal's Shearith Israel was short-lived. Less than a decade after its founding, life in His Majesty's American possessions was disrupted by the American Revolution, and the New York and Montreal congregations changed in dramatic ways. These transformations are reflected in constitutional documents, which fortunately have survived. On the most basic level, the two synagogues were now in different countries. New York's Shearith Israel had to adapt itself to life in a revolutionary republic; its Canadian namesake reorganized itself as a loyalist community.⁷

Like other synagogues in the newly formed United States, New York's Shearith Israel went through a process of democratization in the aftermath of the American Revolution. Membership in the synagogue had always included two categories: electors or *yehidim* and members. Only the *yehidim* had the power to elect the *parnas* and his trustees. Other members could not vote but were entitled to honours and services from the synagogue. Newcomers or 'strangers,' as they were called, could become members in time, and eventually even *yehidim*. These divisions were maintained after the Revolution, although a larger proportion of the membership was then included in the category of elector. Furthermore, electors became responsible for approving the appointment of the *hazan* (cantor/rabbi), *shohet* (ritual meat slaughterer), and *shamash* (beadle). Prior to the American Revolution holders of these positions had been appointed by the *parnas*.⁸

The exact opposite took place in Montreal. By 1778, the membership of the synagogue there had almost completely changed. For example, David Salisbury Franks, the last president of the congregation before the Revolution, left Montreal and swore his allegiance to the American cause. The reconstituted membership still worried about impropriety and created a very strict set of regulations that included several stipulations concerning strangers.⁹

The earliest extant minutes of Montreal's Shearith Israel date from the reorganization of 1778. The regulations enacted at this time included an unparalleled number of clauses concerning public discord. Members were "separately and jointly [to] promise to promote harmony and unanimity amongst us and endeavour as far as lays in our power [*sic*] to assist each other as circumstances will permit (Article the 14th)." As well, "[n]o private quarrels [were] to extend so far as to make division in this congregation ... (Article the 28th)," and "severe penalties [were decreed for] ... those who shall be the means of giving a bad name to any of the Congregation [or] by which a disgrace may be brought on any of the Israelites (Article the 29th)." Along with these rules came a call for "strict obedience and respect to be paid to the Parnassim and the Elders of this Congregation (Article the 27th)." These clauses are indicative of the unease felt by the congregation in the immediate post-revolutionary era.¹⁰

The other clause of note in the 1778 regulations is the stipulation that the congregation founders would receive a double vote in synagogue affairs, and that this right would be transferred to their sons. The congregation minutes offer the rationale that the founding members had gone to considerable expense on behalf of the congregation and wanted to ensure that their vision would continue to be followed. This unprecedented regulation, unthinkable in the new United States, was most likely the result of post-revolutionary paranoia. On the other hand, the synagogue remained open to all Israelites who conformed to its rules. This was a reflection of the already diverse nature of North American Jewry that included a large non-Sephardi element.¹¹

Not long after the Montreal synagogue was reestablished, the congregation was rocked by a miniature scandal. Ezekial Solomons asked that his son, born of a union with a non-Jewish woman and not circumcized, be buried in the congregational cemetery. The elders of the congregation debated whether an uncircumcized male could be buried in consecrated ground and suggested that authorities in London be contacted. Finally, the synagogue elders decided to bury the child, but they also chose to exclude all those who had married outside the faith from any future services or honours. The issue was certainly not unusual for 'frontier' Jewish communities in North America during this era. Almost every congregation had members who were married outside the faith, and every congregation strove to forbid the practice in its constitutional documents and amendments. The ubiquity of these prohibitions indicates that the problem never disappeared.¹²

No further constitutional documents seem to have been written by the Montreal congregation until 1838. In 1784, Hazan Jacob Cohen left Montreal, and the post remained vacant until 1839. In 1825, David David died, and services were relocated from the building on his Little St. James Street property to a small building on Benjamin Hart's property. Hart and M.J. Hays, who served for a time as Montreal chief of police, took charge of the congregation's religious articles, but the congregation lay essentially dormant until 1832. The community was tiny. And it may be that members' interests were focused on earning a living and trying to secure political rights for the residents, in general, and then for themselves as Jews.¹³

Conversely, in New York, the competing forces of populist republicanism and elitist federalism, necessitated the writing and rewriting of the synagogue's constitution. New York's Shearith Israel went through three constitutions between 1790 and 1824. The city was growing, and synagogue authorities faced the challenge of integrating numbers of newcomers into the congregation. Early membership policies, which had been designed for a small, cohesive congregation, now had to be redrawn, lest the immigrants gain too much power in the synagogue. An attempt in 1824 by synagogue leaders to limit membership coincided with a bid by some of the members to 'revive' worship services at Shearith Israel which, they felt, had become too lax. The incentives of revival, on the one hand, and a perceived unfair curtailment of individual rights, on the other, led to a split in the congregation. The result was the founding of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun, the second synagogue in New York City. Historians have blamed the split on the desire of Ashkenazi Jews (those of central and eastern European provenance) to leave Sephardi Shearith Israel. Yet it is quite evident that, even though the founders of Bnai Jeshurun mention the difference in prayer rites, other motivations were paramount in their decision to split from Shearith Israel. Lest we underestimate the importance of the split, it should be remembered that until 1825, Shearith Israel was synonymous with the New York Jewish community. Many felt that in dividing the Jewish community, the founders of Bnai Jeshurun were committing the sin of *sin'at hinam* (literally, wilful hatred). The term refers to the internecine strife of the late Second Temple period, which the rabbis said had caused God to allow the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem. The members of Bnai Jeshurun, however, justified their 'iniquity' by declaring themselves an Ashkenazi congregation rather than a separate Jewish community.¹⁴

The actions of the secessionists were not unusual for the era. North America was gripped by Christian revivalism throughout the early nineteenth century. Historians have dubbed the American revivals, 'The Second Awakening' and the stirrings in British North America, 'The Canada Fire.' While differences existed between the two phenomena, they shared a disdain for religious hierarchy and established custom. And in both, individual religious feeling was stressed over inherited doctrine.¹⁵

The New Yorkers were not the only North American Jews trying to stem the tide of a perceived decline in Jewish faithfulness at this time. As early as 1816, Canadian Moses Hart had published a pamphlet entitled, "General Universal Religion," that promoted a new faith especially for Jews and deists. While this work is usually regarded as an extension of Hart's difficulties in attaining political office due to religious prejudice, his desire for a new, truly universal faith was equally reflective of the Canadian radical religious revival. In 1824, Congregation Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, also experienced a schism. In Charleston, it was 'reform'-minded Jews who broke away from the mother congregation. But as in New York, the Charlestonians were primarily concerned with discovering ways to renew their faith.¹⁶

The religious agitation of the 1820s had its effects on the Jews of Montreal. On 15 October 1832, Benjamin Hart and other members of Congregation Shearith Israel met at the Montreal court house in order to reorganize the congregation and elect new officers. A letter in the congregation's early records indicates that Hart feared a takeover of the Sephardi congregation by Ashkenazi Jews (ironic, since the Harts were themselves of Ashkenazi origin). Montreal was experiencing an economic boom in the 1820s, which attracted numerous immigrants to the city, including Jews. Hoping to avoid a rupture like that experienced in New York City, Hart sent a harshly worded letter to Isaac Valentine detailing his plans for keeping the "Dutch" from taking control of the "Shool [synagogue] for their own."¹⁷

Hart's letter is remarkable because of its value as a record of early nineteenth-century Canadian Jewish institution building, and because of its frank description of the social politics involved. He wrote of the potential for the sale of seats in the reconstituted synagogue provided it remained a 'Portuguese Shool.' The letter included the names of 'strangers' (newcomers) who told Hart that they preferred "our [Shearith Israel's] ceremonies to their own," and other "strangers" who would "perhaps ... hold out [at] first," but who, thought Hart, would

eventually purchase seats at Shearith Israel. The "Dutch," he wrote, were "themselves ashamed of their ceremonies." Hart's plans, as well as the greater number of young 'Sefardi' men, would ensure the continuation of the Sephardi rite at the synagogue.¹⁸ The Montreal congregation limped along throughout the 1830s. Efforts to raise money in Europe were unsuccessful, and as late as 1837, there was still no permanent building. Still, some steps had been taken towards renewal. In 1838, the congregation wrote to England advertising for a *hazan* and a *shohet/shamash*.

While the New York Jewish community was, for all practical purposes, experiencing the institutionalization of revolutionary secessionism, in Montreal maintenance of the *ancien régime* was still the order of the day. It was clear that Montreal's Shearith Israel would remain faithful to its traditions. The congregation's 1838 'Bye Laws' call for the election of trustees by "the enregistered Jews" of the congregation. The trustees would, in turn, see to the election of a "President or *Parnas*, a Treasurer and Secretary" and appoint a *hazan*, *shohet* and *shamas* (Chapter I.: 'Of Election of Officers').

The 1838 'Bye Laws' acknowledge the changing nature of North American Jewish life. Instead of requiring all Jews residing in Montreal to join the congregation, the 'Bye Laws' merely required those seeking membership to lease seats that would be auctioned by the congregation for a period of three years. Those who did not lease seats would not be entitled to honours or services; those who could not afford a seat could apply for one at no charge (Chapter VI.: 'Of Seats'). Does this indicate that alternatives for Jewish worship were available in Montreal at that time? Probably not. Congregation Shaar Hashomayim was not formally organized until the 1840s. The authors of Shearith Israel's 'Bye Laws,' however, clearly understood that Jews could no longer be compelled to join a congregation; their language reflected the tenor of the times.¹⁹

Beginning in 1778, the New York and Montreal congregations traveled separate paths. In many ways, the arrival in Montreal of *Hazan* Abraham De Sola from London in 1847 moved the congregation there even further away from the New York congregation. Early in his tenure, De Sola earned a reputation as a skilful orator (the ability to give a sermon in English had been one of the conditions of his employment). Through his associations in Great Britain and with Montreal's English culture, De Sola cemented Shearith Israel's connection to Victorian British society. During his tenure, the Montreal congregation grew in importance, partly as a reflection of the expanding power of Mont-

real's English residents, and partly as a result of De Sola's high profile in the general community.²⁰

Despite common origins and ties of kinship, then, following the American Revolution, the Montreal and New York congregations embarked on separate journeys. In many ways, what distinguished the constitutions of the two congregations were the growing differences between the emerging nation-states in which they were situated. The body of laws governing New York's Shearith Israel recognized the populism unleashed by the American Revolution. The New York synagogue leadership had to devote considerable effort in trying to curtail the power of their electorate. Montreal's Shearith Israel sought to avoid the effects of the American Revolution and the rebellious secessionism occurring to the south. Their divergent constitutional histories mirror those of Canada and the United States generally. Dedicated to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the early history of the United States was marked by struggles between the central authority and populist forces on the periphery. Ultimately, the United States was plunged into civil war. Witnessing these difficulties, Canada's founders set about carefully outlining the powers of its constituent parts in the hope that, by dedicating itself to "peace, order, and good government," it would avoid later conflict.

Notes

- 1 Joseph Yeshurun Pinto, *The form of prayers which was performed at the Jews Synagogue in the City of New York on Thursday, October 23, 1760; being the day appointed by proclamation for a general thanksgiving to Almighty God for the reducing of Canada to His Majesty's Dominions. Composed by D.R. Joseph Yeshurun Pinto in the Hebrew Language and translated into English by a friend to truth.* (New York: Printed and sold by W. Wexman, at his New Printing Office, in Broad Street, not far from the exchange, 1760). See also Solomon Frank, *Two Centuries in the Life of a Synagogue* (Montreal: Corporation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, 1968), pp. 26–27. New York's Congregation Shearith Israel dates its founding to the arrival of twenty-three Jews in New Amsterdam in 1654. Their first synagogue, however, was not built until 1730.
- 2 Leo Hershkowitz convincingly disputes the 1654 date for the founding of the New York Jewish community in his essay, "New Amsterdam's Twenty-Three Jews – Myth or Reality?" Using newly-discovered documents from

the Gemeente Archief in Amsterdam, Hershkowitz reconstructs some of the comings and goings of the first Jews in North America. With the exception of Asser Levy, most of New Amsterdam's Jewish residents were transient, in America for economic motives, not colonization. The year 1654, he concludes, is too optimistic a date for the founding of the first Jewish congregation in America. A permanent Jewish community able to sustain a *minyan* (prayer quorum) did not arise until the eighteenth century (Hershkowitz, "New Amsterdam's Twenty-Three Jews – Myth or Reality?" in *Hebrew and the Bible in America: The First Two Centuries*, Shalom Goldman, ed. [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993], pp. 171–83). See also *idem*, "Asser Levy and the Inventories of Early New York Jews," *American Jewish History* 80 (1990–91): 25–27; Egon Wolff and Frieda Wolff, "The Problem of the First Jewish Settlers in New Amsterdam, 1654," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981): 169–77. For the standard account of New York Jewish beginnings, see Arnold Wiznitzer, "The Exodus from Brazil and the Arrival in New Amsterdam of the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers, 1654," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44 (1954): 80–98. See also David and Tamar De Sola Pool, *Old Faith in the New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel, 1654–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 35. The Pools note that a 1695 map of New York City drawn by John Miller refers to a synagogue and that documents from 1700 describe a building on Mill Street "commonly known by the name of the Jews Synagogue."

- 3 Pool, *Old Faith*, pp. 499–500. The insecurity of the early New York Jews may have been exacerbated by the greeting they received when they arrived in New Amsterdam. The 'twenty-three' were met with hostility from Governor Peter Stuyvesant who decried Jews' usurious business practices and articulated his fear that their arrival might set in place unprecedented religious freedom. He believed that if the Jews gained a foothold, the more numerous 'Lutherans and Papists' would soon claim rights from the tiny Calvinist colony. See Stuyvesant's letter of 30 October 1654. "Some New Matter on the Subject," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 18 (1909): 20.
- 4 Pool, *Old Faith*, pp. 499–500. On the practice of sending away poor Jewish immigrants (*herem ha-yishuv*), see Salo W. Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948), vol. 2, pp. 4–17.
- 5 Authorities in Amsterdam permitted the 1654 Jewish arrivals to stay in New Amsterdam – much to Stuyvesant's chagrin – "provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the [Dutch West India] Company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation."

- (Samuel Oppenheim, "The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654–1664," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 19 [1905]: 8).
- 6 Founders of Shearith Israel in Montreal included: Chapman Abraham, brothers Gerson, Simon and Isaac Levy, Benjamin Lyons, cousins Ezekial and Levy Solomons, David Lazarus, brothers John and David Salisbury Franks, brothers Samuel and Isaac Judah, and Andrew Hays. Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), pp. 10–11, 15.
 - 7 According to available sources, cordial relations were maintained, and there were families with members on both sides of the border. With the possible exception of disruptions during the War of 1812, the two congregations were never fully detached one from the other. On connections between the Montreal and New York congregations, see Pool, *Old Faith*, pp. 431–32. On the historic ties between the Canadian and American Jewish communities, see Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians and Anglo-Canadians, 1759–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), pp. 67–117.
 - 8 On the democratization of American Jewish congregations, see Jonathan Sarna, "The Impact of the American Revolution on American Jews," in *The American Jewish Experience*, Jonathan Sarna, ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), pp. 20–28; Malcolm H. Stern, "American Jewry Comes of Age," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, Bertram W. Korn, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), pp. 539–49; and Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 107–41. Despite the democratization, congregations denied membership to indentured servants and black freemen. See Jacob R. Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, 4 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986) vol. 1, pp. 246–48; and *idem*, *Early American Jewry*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1951, 1955) vol. 2, p. 427.
 - 9 The Montreal congregation now included: Levy Solomons, Uriah Judah, Samuel Judah, Andrew Hays, David bar Abram, Myer Myers, David David, Heinman Pines, Barnet Lions, Abraham Judah, and Samuel David. The group erected a small synagogue on land owned by David David in Little St. James Street. The acquisition of religious articles was not completed until three years later. Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. 15.
 - 10 Congregation Shearith Israel of Montreal, "Regulations, 3rd Tebeth 5539 (1779)," Minute Book, 1778–1780, photocopy in AJA File CS-8355. Frank speculates that – the founders being loyalists – the stipulation curtailing the rights of 'strangers' arose out of paranoia at the height of the American

Revolutionary period. Frank also tells the story of David McCain, a.k.a. Jacob Felt, who came to Quebec in May, 1797 masquerading as a Jew and allegedly hoping to foment insurrection. McCain had apparently been sent by M. Audet, the French ambassador to the United States. McCain was later executed for his actions. Frank, *Two Centuries*, p. 30. See also, Benjamin G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Eagle Publishing, 1941), pp. 67–68.

- 11 Frank, *Two Centuries*, pp. 28–29; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. 16. Though unusual for congregations, European *havarot* (religious confraternities) sometimes ascribed hereditary rights to their leading members. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, vol. 2, pp. 17–18. According to demographer Ira Rosenwaike, the North American Jewish community was predominantly Ashkenazi in origin as early as 1730. Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1985), pp. 2–3.
- 12 Congregation minutes recorded that: “The Israelites of the town of Montreal were this day called together to have voice of the congregation concerning the death of a son of Mr. Ezekial Solomons, to know whether he was to be buried according to the rules and customs of Jews the said child not being circumcised. Several circumstances favorable to the said Ezekial Solomons appeared to us, for which reason we allow his being buried, but at the same time we do hereby unanimously agree and declare that no man or boy whomsoever shall be after sixty days from the date buried in the burying place of this congregation unless circumcised.” Cited in Frank, *Two Centuries*, p. 29. See also Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. 15. J. Sheldon and Judith C. Godfrey note that several members of the early Jewish community of Halifax, Nova Scotia (c.1749–1756) were married to non-Jewish women yet continued to participate in the traditional community that developed there. J. Sheldon and Judith C. Godfrey, *Search Out the Land: The Jews and the Growth of Equality in British Colonial America, 1740–1867* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), pp. 76–77. Similarly, Philadelphia’s Congregation Rodeph Shalom (Pursuer of Peace) exempted Aaron Dropsie from the clause excluding those who intermarried because he was too important to the community to alienate. Minute Books of Congregation Rodeph Shalom, April 18, 1826, Philadelphia Jewish Archives, Balch Institute; Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), p. 47. Malcolm Stern has calculated a 28.7 per cent intermarriage rate for this period. See his “Jewish Marriage and Intermarriage in the Federal Period 1776–1840,” *American Jewish Archives* 19 (1967): 142–43; and Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, vol. 1, pp. 247–48.

- 13 Esther I. Blaustein, Rachel A. Esar, and Evelyn Miller, "Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Shearith Israel) Montreal, 1768–1968," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 23 (1971): 114–15. In 1791, British residents of Lower Canada, Jews among them, petitioned for an elected legislative assembly. By the nineteenth century, the Hart brothers, first Moses and then Ezekial, tried to win a seat in the Lower Canada assembly. Ezekial was successful in 1807 but was denied his seat on account of his religion. Lower Canada's Jews continued to press for the right to hold public office and swear oaths appropriate to their faith. They finally succeeded in 1832, but the issue of oaths was not resolved until 1837. Among other sources, see Godfrey and Godfrey, *Search Out the Land*, pp. 171–216; and Michael Brown, "The Beginning of Jewish Emancipation in Canada: The Hart Affair," *Michael* 10 (1986): 31–38.
- 14 Pool, *Old Faith*, pp. 436–39; Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), pp. 40–49; Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, vol. 1, p. 225. On changes in American thought and culture, see Jean V. Matthews, *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture, 1800–1830* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).
- 15 The revivals in the United States are described in Nathan Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Canadian revivalism has recently been examined by George A. Rawlyk in his monograph, *The Canada Fire* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- 16 On Moses Hart, see Jacob R. Marcus, "The Modern Religion of Moses Hart," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 20 (1947), pp. 585–615. The stimuli for Charleston's splinter congregation, The Reformed Society of Israelites, are summarized in William J. Hagy, *This Happy Land* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), pp. 133–45; and Gary Zola's *Isaac Harby of Charleston* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), pp. 112–15.
- 17 Educated in Philadelphia and New York, Hart would have had first-hand knowledge of American Jewish developments. Blaustein et al., "Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue," pp. 115, 119. It is unclear why reorganization efforts were resumed in the 1830s. Perhaps the conclusion of all the political turmoil surrounding the Hart Affair and the granting of political rights to Canada's Jews permitted Montreal Jews to concentrate inwardly once again. On the economic growth of this period, see Gerald Tulchinsky, *The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation, 1837–53* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 7. See also, letter of Benjamin Hart to Isaac Valentine, 14 October 1833, Early Records,

- 1833–1909, Congregation Shearith Israel of Montreal, AJA Microfilm No. 389. The irony of describing a Sephardi synagogue with the Yiddish word, *shul* (school or synagogue) seems to have been lost on Benjamin Hart. Valentine served as the reconstituted congregation's president and prayer reader until the arrival of Hazan David Piza in 1839. See Arthur D. Hart, ed., *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto: Jewish Publications Limited, 1926), pp. 39, 499.
- 18 Benjamin Hart to Isaac Valentine, 14 October 1833. The letter also described Hart's suggestions for the building of a synagogue. Hart advised buying outright any lot and suggested that a middle lot was better than a corner lot because it would have fewer windowed facades open to the threat of vandalism. Hart wanted to retire from the synagogue's board, but was afraid to leave with so many plans unresolved.
- 19 Blaustein et al., "Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue," pp. 114–15; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, pp. 33–36. Just as Shearith Israel begat Bnai Jeshurun, dissatisfied members of Bnai Jeshurun left to form Congregation Anshe Chesed (People of Righteousness) in 1828. In 1839, 'Polish' members of both Bnai Jeshurun and Anshe Chesed left their congregations to form Congregation Shaarey Zedek (Gates of Mercy) and 'German' members of Anshe Chesed left to found Shaarey Hashamayim (Gates of Heaven). Congregation Rodeph Sholem (Pursuer of Peace) was founded in 1842 by another 'German' offshoot group from Anshe Chesed. In 1843, there was a split in Shaarey Zedek that resulted in the founding of Congregation Beth Israel (House of Israel). As historian Hyman Grinstein has written, "the story of the congregations of New York, until 1860, at least, is one long account of secession and more secession." Grinstein, *New York*, pp. 49–50. Chapter II of the 'Bye Laws' ('Of Prayers') of Shearith Israel in Montreal states quite clearly that the prayers would "forever be read in the Hebrew Language, according to the custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, and no other." English sermons were permissible when directed by the parnas. *Bye Laws of the Congregation Kahal Kadosh Shearith Israel of Montreal* in the National Archives of Canada.
- 20 Blaustein et al., "Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue," pp. 116–17. In 1853, Abraham De Sola became a lecturer at McGill University and later was appointed professor. On Montreal Jewish life in the De Sola era, see Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, pp. 40–60; Brown, *Jew or Juif?* pp. 43–46 and elsewhere; and Richard Menkis, "A Missionary Sermon to the Jews in Mid-Nineteenth Century Montreal: Texts and Contexts," *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, vol. 1, Barry Walfish, ed. (Haifa: Haifa University, 1993), pp. 333–49.

This page intentionally left blank