

Commerce and Community: Philadelphia's Early Jewish Settlers, 1736–76

ABSTRACT: Philadelphia's earliest Jewish settlers created a web of connections that was reinforced by necessity, trust, and obligation. In the absence of any Jewish institution, they collaborated in observing their religion and relied on one another as they established themselves in business. Interdependence in these dual realms complicated their relationships. Successful economic collaborations often led to longstanding partnerships, and colleagues often merged their families. However, bad luck, dishonesty, and imprudence disrupted relationships and impeded the communal cohesion. Communal and religious needs and economic necessities sometimes facilitated and sometimes complicated the other.

IN 1769, PHILADELPHIA MERCHANT Barnard Gratz traveled to London in the hope of cultivating relationships with exporters who might supply him with goods suitable for the American market. As soon as the ship carrying him across the Atlantic docked, Barnard dashed off a note to his brother Michael in Philadelphia. His letter was similar to most of his other correspondence: he spelled out his intentions regarding business, and he reminded Michael, who was also his business partner, about pending transactions. He concluded with messages to friends. "Love to Mr. Mrs. Bush & Children," he wrote, "[c]omp[li]ments to Mr I Jacobs & family & all the Jews in Philad[elphi]a."¹ Gratz was not overstating when he said to send regards to all the Jews in the city. There were not very many of them. When Gratz had arrived about fifteen years earlier, there were only a handful in Philadelphia and the surrounding towns. He had seen their numbers increase slowly, their lives intersecting as they built a community.

¹ Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, July 18, 1769, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, Mss.Ms.Coll. 72, American Philosophical Society (APS), Philadelphia, PA.

By the time Gratz traveled to London, there were about fifty Jewish men residing in Philadelphia and its hinterlands—and Gratz probably knew them all.²

The Gratzes and their Jewish friends and colleagues inserted greetings to one another in almost all their letters. In 1760, for example, Barnard Gratz's cousin Jacob Henry sent a message from Newport, Rhode Island, wishing associate David Franks and his family and "all other Friends . . . perfect health," and "[s]ervice to all . . . acquaintances Particularly to Mr. Benj. Levy Family." In a 1761 letter, Myer Josephson of Reading wrote that he had seen "Jacob of Hickorytown and his daughter Rebecca," and in other letters he noted that he had seen Mr. Mordecai in Allentown and that Joseph Simon of Lancaster had arrived home after having been on the road for business. He asked the Gratzes to send "regards to my neighbor, the noble Mr. Nathan." Joseph Simon often sent his love to Philadelphia-based "Mr Bush and his Wife and Family," and Barnard Gratz frequently sent greetings to Simon's nephew Levy Andrew Levy.³

Almost all the Jews who settled in Philadelphia and its environs migrated from central or eastern Europe. Most of them had lived in insular communities that operated according to Jewish law and tradition. They spoke Yiddish and were familiar with Hebrew, the language of prayer and the bible. Their letters to one another often evoked their commonalities and their sense of solidarity. They used Hebrew and Yiddish words and phrases; some of them even penned their names in Hebrew characters, especially when they were still new immigrants.⁴ Some translated their Yiddish names into English, such as Myer Josephson, whose name in Hebrew was Myer, son of Joseph. Others adopted Anglicized names—Barnard and Michael Gratz, for instance—but some of their colleagues continued to address them by their Yiddish names, *Ber* and *Yechiel*. Some

²This number is based on an analysis of surviving documents, almost all of which are business letters and accounts. It is impossible to estimate the number of women and children because barely any sources pertain to them.

³Jacob Henry to David Franks and Barnard Gratz, July 11, 1760, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, (McA MSS 011), McAllister Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP); Myer Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Nov. 2, 1761, Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, SC-4292, American Jewish Archives (AJA), Cincinnati, OH; Myer Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Dec. 9, 1761, Feb. 21, 1762, and Feb. 28, 1762, box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, MS-451, AJA; Joseph Simon to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 11, 1761, and Barnard Gratz to Joseph Simon, Apr. 3, 1760, box 1, folder 47, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁴See, for example, Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 1761 and Jan. 7, 1761, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Receipts, Apr. 3, 1759, and Mar. 9, 1761, Elizabeth Paschell Receipt Book, 1750–62, vol. 27, Morris Family Papers, Collection 0721, Hagley Library, Wilmington, DE.

dated letters to Jewish colleagues according to the Hebrew calendar and included traditional Yiddish greetings, idioms, and biblical allusions. In his 1761 letter to the Gratzes, dated according to the Hebrew year 5522, Myer Josephson bemoaned his circumstances: "There is nothing new under the sun only a great and bitter cry at this time in the country for money," he told them in Yiddish, using phrases from Ecclesiastes and Genesis, references that he likely expected the Gratzes to grasp.⁵ They mentioned Jewish holidays and the Sabbath, which they referred to as the Hebrew Shabbat, written in Hebrew letters.⁶

These details reveal authors' commonalities and shared sense of community. Like Jews everywhere, "bonds of Jewish peoplehood," rooted in faith and history, tied them together.⁷ These details, however, were addenda to letters that primarily pertained to business. As the community coalesced, their mutual dependency was not only based on cultural commonalities and communal needs; their economic endeavors often tied them together too. As newcomers arrived in the region, they relied on coreligionists for opportunities to enter the world of trade, and many of them continued to cooperate in commercial ventures for decades. However, they never allowed ethno-religious bonds to cloud their judgment. A look at how the community coalesced in colonial Philadelphia and its environs offers an opportunity for examining the ways in which Jews' communal and religious needs and their economic necessities overlapped—one sometimes facilitating and sometimes complicating the other.

Historians have investigated this informal community and noted its members' close connections. Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman's landmark *History of the Jews of Philadelphia* chronicled the development of the community and detailed the lives of its individual members. But the authors did not interrogate the reasons these men had for settling in Philadelphia and the complex dynamics of their relationships. Scholars of early American Jewry have also included Philadelphia's emergent community in their broader investigations. This scholarship primarily deals with Jews' endeavors to become accepted in a Protestant environment while retaining their separate identity. It deals with Jews' religious lives, their efforts to observe, and their status in Christian America, including the ways in which they sought

⁵ Myer Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Dec. 9, 1761, box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA.

⁶ See, for example, Isaac Adolphus to Michael Gratz, Jan. 19, 1767, box 1, folder 1, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Michael Gratz to Barnard Gratz, Oct. 1, 1772, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

⁷ Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2004), 25.

to achieve equality.⁸ By highlighting the conditions Jews faced as a separate religious/ethnic group, existing scholarship presents Jews as monolithic and cohesive, and it elides the complicated dynamics that characterized Jews' relationships with one another. This scholarship also fails to examine the ways in which new communities were born. A closer look at Philadelphia's Jews sheds light on the informal character of their religious community and brings to the fore tensions and interpersonal conflicts that arose as they tapped ethnic bonds to establish their economic lives.

More recently, some historians have begun to place colonial American Jewry within the context of the Atlantic world—highlighting, among other things, their participation in commerce and the trade networks they developed in addition to the unprecedented social and cultural interchange of which they were a part. This scholarship, however, primarily investigates Sephardim (Jews who had their roots in Iberia, where, at the end of the fifteenth century, they were forced to choose between conversion and expulsion), who created a dense web of connections throughout the Atlantic world that facilitated their mercantile endeavors.⁹ Philadelphia's early Jews represented a new stream of Jewish immigration to America. Almost all of them were Ashkenazim from central and eastern Europe. This group was culturally different from Sephardim, and they were excluded from

⁸ Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1956); David Brener, *The Jews of Lancaster: A Story with Two Beginnings* (Lancaster, PA, 1979); Richard Brilliant, "Portraits as Silent Claimants: Jewish Class Aspirations and Representational Strategies in Colonial and Federal America," in *Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America*, ed. Richard Brilliant (Munich, 1997); Naomi W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York, 1992); Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore, 1992); Stanley Feldstein, *The Land That I Show You: Three Centuries of Jewish Life in America* (Garden City, NY, 1978); Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* (New York, 1985), and *The Jewish Experience in America* (Waltham, MA, 1969); Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew: 1492–1776*, 3 vols. (Detroit, 1970); Henry Samuel Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia: Their History from the Earliest Settlements to the Present Time* (Philadelphia, 1894); William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005); Sarna, *American Judaism*; Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore, 1997). There are a few biographies of the most prominent members of the community; see William Vincent Byars, *B. & M. Gratz: Merchants in Philadelphia, 1754–1798: Papers of Interest to Their Posterity and the Posterity of Their Associates* (Jefferson City, MO, 1916); Sidney M. Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz: Their Lives and Times* (Lanham, MD, 1994); and Mark Abbott Stern, *David Franks: Colonial Merchant* (University Park, PA, 2010).

⁹ Paolo Barnardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800* (New York, 2001); David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950* (Portland, OR, 2001); Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (Portland, OR, 2005); Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, 2009).

Sephardic networks of trade and kinship. They had to establish their own economic networks at the same time that they were building their religious congregation.¹⁰

It was economic opportunity rather than Pennsylvania's putative religious freedom that attracted Jews to the area. Situated on the Delaware River, Philadelphia was on its way to becoming the largest port in America. The town burgeoned as merchants intensified trade with the British Isles, Europe, the Caribbean, and other American colonies, exporting the region's flour, pork, beef, and lumber and importing manufactured goods and commodities to sell to the growing population. William Black, a visitor to the colony, marveled at the multiple wharves projecting into the river to facilitate "[a] very Considerable Traffick, in Shipping and unshipping of Goods." Residents and visitors met at lively taverns and coffee houses and on Tuesdays and Fridays at the bustling market—"allow'd by Foreigners," according to Black, "to be the best of its bigness in the known World, and undoubtedly the largest in America"—where a shopper could purchase "every necessary for the support of life thro'ut the whole year, both extraordinary good and reasonably cheap."¹¹ To the west, abundant fertile land attracted a steady flow of immigrants to southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, which was becoming the "breadbasket of the Atlantic community."¹²

It was undoubtedly the region's growth that attracted Nathan Levy, who settled in Philadelphia with his family in about 1736 and opened a shop selling European and East Indian goods that he imported from London.¹³ His nephew David Franks arrived in about 1740, and the two

¹⁰ Tijl Vanneste notes a separation between Sephardi and Ashkenazi networks in the European diamond trade. He notes a significant gap in research on Ashkenazi networks. See Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks* (London, 2011), 95–96. See also Natalie Zemon Davis, "Epilogue," in Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*, 217.

¹¹ Alonzo Brock, "Journal of William Black, 1744 (continued)" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 1 (1877): 242, 244, 405.

¹² Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986); George Boudreau, *Independence: A Guide to Historic Philadelphia* (Yardley, PA, 2012); Edwin B. Bronner, "Village into Town: 1701–1746," in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, 1982); Thomas Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 15, 74.

¹³ Abigaill Franks to Naphtali Franks, Dec. 3, 1736, in *The Letters of Abigaill Levy Franks, 1733–1748*, ed. Edith B. Gelles (New Haven, CT, 2004), 56, 133; Advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, Aug. 3, 10, Sept. 7, 14, 1738, Oct. 2, 1740. There was a Jewish presence prior to this time—Jews from New Amsterdam traded along the Delaware River from the mid-seventeenth century, including Levy's brother-in-law, Jacob Franks, who sometimes traveled to Philadelphia to conduct business before Levy settled there. See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 38–39; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 2:5; Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America*, 175; Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 18–20. Wolf and Whiteman, 38–39, also maintain that, in spite of the fact that there are no records, there were probably Jews who settled in the area. The first documented evidence of a Jew living in the area pertains to Isaac

merged their interests a few years later. In addition to importing goods, they briskly invested in diverse enterprises, including shipping in indentured servants, mostly artisans and mechanics, who could service the needs of local inhabitants. They acquired property and ships that sailed to Cape Breton, New Providence, Newfoundland, and London and rented freight to other merchants; and they exported sought-after products from Pennsylvania's hinterlands, including, most notably, furs and skins that they received as payment from Indian traders.¹⁴ Levy and Franks's move to Philadelphia was strategic. Their families' mercantile activities spanned the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, and Levy and Franks's purpose was to extend their collective commercial reach. They had access to family capital and credit and a dense network, facilitating their rapid rise as they connected Philadelphia and its backcountry to London and other Atlantic ports.¹⁵

Levy and Franks's choice of Philadelphia made sense from an economic perspective, but not from a religious one. There were no Jews living in Philadelphia and therefore no communal supports. In contrast, New York, where they grew up, was home to an established Jewish congregation with at least seventy families by the 1730s. An organized community made observance easier. Members attended regular prayer services, their children were given a religious education, and the needy among them received aid. At home, Levy's and Franks's families observed the rituals of the Sabbath, holidays, and dietary laws, which was made easier because the synagogue retained a *shochet* (a ritual slaughterer) to slaughter animals and butcher the meat in the prescribed manner for the community, and it produced matzo for consumption during Passover.¹⁶ While it was typical in mercan-

Miranda, an Italian convert who immigrated to Pennsylvania. James Logan referred to him as "an apostate Jew or fashionable Christian," quoted in Wolf and Whiteman, 19.

¹⁴ Advertisements, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 26, 1745, Mar. 26, 1748, Nov. 23, 1749, July 19, 1750, Jan. 8, 1751, Mar. 26, 1751, June 27, 1751; David Franks Account Book, 1760–1767, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). In 1782, David Franks directed Tench Coxe to sell his properties but said that Coxe would need permission from Benjamin Levy because the properties were tied up in Nathan Levy's estate; see David Franks to Tench Coxe and Andrew Hamilton, May 10, 1782, SC-3644, AJA; Gelles, *Letters of Abigail Levy Franks*, 82n3, 107n4. For Union, Gelles cites Sept. 3, 1748, NOL, CO 5/1226 (Naval Office Lists, Public Records Office, London); also in "Ship Registers for the Port of Philadelphia, 1726–1775 (continued)," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 24 (1900): 221, 351, 359, 507, 514; "Ship Registers for the Port of Philadelphia, 1726–1775 (continued)," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 25 (1901): 126, 130. See also Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 30.

¹⁵ On Moses Levy and Jacob Franks of New York, see Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, 1998), 134, 179; Gelles, *Letters of Abigail Levy Franks*, xviii, xix–xx, 60n4; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 2:580, 617, 712–13, 723–24; Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, 1998), 135, 188–90.

¹⁶ Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 1:306–20, 343–53; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 12–13. In her letters to her son Naphtali, David Franks's mother, Abigail Levy Franks, provides insight into the family's religious observance. See Gelles, *Letters of Abigail Levy Franks*.

tile families for sons to disperse to other ports, they tended to settle in other Jewish communities. Nathan Levy's and David Franks's brothers moved to London and Jamaica, two of several Atlantic ports with robust Jewish communities.¹⁷ The attraction of Philadelphia, then, was its commercial potential, and Nathan Levy and David Franks were clearly willing to sacrifice the supports of an established community.

It was not long after Levy and Franks made Philadelphia their home that other Jews began to trickle into the region. They were almost all Ashkenazim, and few of them had the deep connections that the Sephardim inhabiting the Atlantic world had. Sephardic Jews and their crypto-Jewish and New Christian kin took advantage of opportunities in the colonies belonging to the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch empires during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁸ Long involved in long-distance trade, their business skills, language abilities, and extensive diasporic networks facilitated economic success in far-flung locations, and communities and even families continued to disperse as merchants sent their sons to various Atlantic ports to maximize trade opportunities. Sephardim developed trade networks that were integral to Atlantic commerce, and they established Jewish communities in several Atlantic centers.¹⁹ Their dispersal

¹⁷ Abigaill Franks to Naphtali Franks, Dec. 16, 1733, Dec. 3, 1736, Aug. 29, 1742, in Gelles, *Letters of Abigaill Levy Franks*, 17, 56, 112; Herbert Friedenwald, "Isaac Levy's Claim to Property in Georgia," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1901): 57–62; Malcolm Stern, *Americans of Jewish Descent: A Compendium of Genealogy* (Cincinnati, OH, 1960), 109.

¹⁸ The destruction of the Second Temple marks the start of the Jewish diaspora. Jews in exile from their biblical homeland retained their religion, but scattered groups developed different practices, customs, and traditions. By the time of European expansion to North America, the two major Jewish groups in Europe were Ashkenazim (those of central and eastern European extraction) and Sephardim (those of Iberian extraction.) Many Sephardim yielded to demands to convert to Catholicism (New Christians). Some of them (crypto-Jews) lived outwardly as Catholics in Spanish and Portuguese societies but practiced Judaism in secret.

¹⁹ Networks allowed participants to more effectively move goods and get them into the hands of trusted colleagues. Because of a scarcity of specie and even cash, rather than making payment for goods, trade operated within a system in which merchants owed each other for goods. A chain of credit relationships tied one merchant to many others. On networks in general, see David Dickson, Jan Parmentier, and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds., *Irish and Scottish Mercantile Networks in Europe and Overseas in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ghent, 2007); Sheryllynne Haggerty, "Merely for Money"? *Business Culture in the British Atlantic, 1750–1815* (Liverpool, 2012); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (New York, 1995); Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York, 1998); Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1948). On Jewish networks, see Lois Dubin, "Introduction: Port Jews in the Atlantic World," *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 117–27; Wim Klooster, "Networks of Colonial Entrepreneurs: The Founders of the Jewish Settlements in Dutch America, 1650s and 1660s," in Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*, 33–49; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT, 2009); Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks*.

boosted their ability to conduct long-distance trade, but it served other purposes too. Links to other Jewish communities were a safeguard in case they were forced to flee: they would have a place to go and another community to join. The greater community was also a critical source for marriage partners, for endogamy was a priority for many Jews.²⁰

Adverse conditions in central Europe brought a new stream of Jews into Amsterdam, London, and their colonies from the late seventeenth century. These Ashkenazi Jews shared a religion with Sephardim, but, having practiced in separate contexts for centuries, they differed culturally, and many of their traditions diverged. Divisions between the two groups were conspicuous in Amsterdam and London, where they established separate synagogues. Ashkenazim flowed into the Atlantic world too, and the two groups worshipped together, using Sephardi rites in Sephardi-dominated synagogues. They coexisted, often uncomfortably.²¹

At about the same time that Levy and Franks settled, a significant factor generating migration to Pennsylvania and other British colonies was the 1740 Plantation Act, which allowed colonial settlers born outside the British realm to become naturalized after seven years' residence. It was a move on the part of Parliament to attract settlers to the colonies, for the same concession was not offered in Britain itself. More significantly, the act allowed Jews to take an oath on the Pentateuch and without the words "upon the true faith of a Christian." This change mitigated the constraints that Jews who were drawn to commercial opportunities in the British empire had until then been compelled to accept. With the implementation of the Plantation Act, Jews could enjoy the same rights and privileges in their economic lives as any other naturalized subjects in the colonies.²²

²⁰ Jewish communities in Europe frequently dissipated following persecution or expulsion. Jews were also among the colonists forced to abandon their property in Dutch Brazil when it reverted to a Portuguese colony. Barnardini and Fiering, *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe*; Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires, 1540–1740* (Boston, 2002); Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*.

²¹ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 5, 18–19.

²² Morris U. Schappes, *Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654–1875* (New York, 1950), 26; Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 17; Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985* (Detroit, 1989), 1:41. Until the Plantation Act was passed, Jews could become endenized, which was equivalent to permanent residence. Endenization applied only to the individual applicant. Children who were born outside England prior to their father's endenization remained aliens and could therefore not inherit his property. The monarch could also withdraw a denizen's privileges, even posthumously. His heirs would lose their inheritance. A. H. Carpenter, "Naturalization in England and the American Colonies," *American Historical Review* 9 (1904): 291–92; Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley, 2002), 36–37; Thomas W. Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study of the Jew Bill of 1753* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 15–16.

The news that Levy and Franks, scions of merchants with an extensive network, had established themselves in Philadelphia was undoubtedly a factor that drew Jewish newcomers to the region. A few Ashkenazi migrants made their way to Philadelphia following Levy and Franks' arrival by way of London or New York. In contrast to the Levy and Franks families, however, they were poor, without capital or credit to facilitate their entry into the commercial world, and they were strangers to Atlantic world trade. Therefore, they lacked the layers of connections enjoyed by many Sephardim, as well as Levy and Franks. Those who arrived in the region in the 1740s and 1750s nevertheless quickly became associated with Levy and Franks.

Barely anyone would trust a newcomer who had no experience in the local market and no one to vouch for him, but Jews' bonds—their shared identity and practices—fostered a degree of both trust and obligation. The broader Jewish diaspora gave aspiring young men the possibility of access to the world of trade; established Jewish traders sometimes gave newcomers an opportunity.²³ Levy and Franks would have been on the lookout for reliable agents to serve them, just as they had served as agents for others as part of their training.²⁴ The Jewish communities with which the Levy and Franks families were associated represented a source through which to recruit trustworthy young men—trustworthy, that is, but not yet trusted. Trust was not automatic or implicit among Jews simply because they were Jews, but the bonds they shared, their layers of connections and interdependency, promoted accountability and honesty and therefore engendered a degree of trust. Of equal importance, ties that connected merchants and their families facilitated cooperation. Networks were “a public means of social communication and circulating judgment about the value of other members of communities,” and they allowed members to easily share information about colleagues' integrity and diligence.²⁵

²³ Jonathan Sarna, in *American Judaism*, highlights the “Portuguese Jewish Nation,” Sephardic Crypto-Jews who composed “something of an imagined community” and who were bound by “tangled webs of association and kinship, common memories of persecution, and a shared devotion to the maintenance of the Sephardic heritage and tradition” (5). The same applies to Philadelphia's settlers, who were predominantly Ashkenazim.

²⁴ On ways in which young men started their careers in trade, see Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2009); Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 47; Haggerty, “*Merely for Money?*,” 45–65, 97.

²⁵ Francesca Trivellato, “Sephardic Merchants in the Early Modern Atlantic and Beyond: Toward a Comparative Historical Approach to Business Cooperation,” in Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*, 102; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, “La Nación among the Nations: Portuguese and Other Maritime Trading Diasporas in the Atlantic, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries,” in Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*, 79. Quote from Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, 2.

We shall soon see evidence from the 1750s that Franks assisted a few new immigrants with work when they arrived and that they became acquainted through network connections. These later relationships suggest that, in spite of a want of evidence, the Jews who arrived in the 1740s had some kind of connection to Levy and Franks and that they specifically came to the area because Levy and Franks were there. There is reason to believe that an arrangement with Levy and Franks motivated the immigrant Joseph Simon to settle in Lancaster. The earliest evidence of Simon's association with Levy and Franks is from the late 1740s, when he was serving as their agent in their backcountry ventures. The fact that Simon lived in Lancaster is significant. The town had developed into a bustling center and was one of the largest inland settlements in North America. It served as a marketplace for the region's agricultural produce and for imports that merchants brought from Philadelphia. Situated at the intersection between the Atlantic littoral and the hinterlands, it was also a terminus for the fur trade. Having a Lancaster-based associate was an enormous benefit to any merchant who had western customers, as Levy and Franks did, and it is likely that Simon was stationed in Lancaster to manage their backcountry ventures.²⁶

It is possible that Simon settled in Lancaster before meeting Levy and Franks, as some historians have asserted, and that they became associated through trade. It is more likely, however, that Levy and Franks' relatives in London or New York introduced the two parties before Simon settled in Lancaster and that his move there was part of Levy and Franks' ambitious plan to optimize their western interests.²⁷ A few facts point to this. Joseph Simon, who was originally from central Europe, spent some time in England before moving to America in about 1742.²⁸ Simon was connected

²⁶ Jerome H. Wood Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1790* (Harrisburg, PA, 1979), 93–94; Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 76.

²⁷ Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 33, does not question the relationship, asserting only that “the success of the firm of Levy and Franks in the West depended first of all on Joseph Simon”; Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 20, asserts that a few Jews probably went to Lancaster with the many German immigrants who settled in the area and that “when Simon associated himself with the firm of Levy and Franks . . . he produced a combine which soon became one of the foremost Indian trading houses in the country”; Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 29, assert that Levy and Franks met Simon after he had settled in Lancaster and was “the leading merchant of that town.” Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 1:278, presents their economic interactions but does not interrogate their relationship. Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles*, 178, states that Simon arrived in Lancaster and soon became the leader of a group of merchants who specialized in supplying frontier settlers. None question how Simon came to be there or how he achieved prominence.

²⁸ The Plantation Act allowed immigrants to be naturalized after seven years' residence in the colonies. Simon was naturalized in 1749 and therefore had to have arrived no later than 1742; Brener, *The Jews of Lancaster*, 4, 11; J. H. Hollander, “The Naturalization of Jews in the American Colonies Under the Act of 1740,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 5 (1897): 103–17.

to members of the New York community who were part of the same congregation as the Franks family. Simon himself spent time in New York and sometimes attended synagogue there during the 1740s. It is likely that Levy and Franks recruited Simon as their agent through their London or New York kin either before he departed London for the colonies or when he arrived in New York.²⁹

It was no simple matter to gain entry into the world of trade. A young man needed a period of training to learn the requisite technical skills, and he needed to nurture connections and build up a reputation in order to get credit and to acquire goods. Few new immigrants had experience with the local market, and they rarely had access to a kinship network such as the one that had facilitated Levy and Franks's rapid commercial rise.³⁰ Simon, however, quickly became associated with Indian traders Alexander, Daniel, James, and John Lowrey; by 1744 he was supplying them with goods that they used in exchanges with Indians.³¹ To procure these goods, he must have had credit with Philadelphia merchants. Later sources show that Franks initiated several other Jewish newcomers, financing their businesses or employing them as clerks. Given that Simon was dealing with Indian traders, that Levy and Franks were economically involved in Lancaster, and that by 1751 Simon was running a store in Lancaster that Levy and Franks owned, we can assume that Simon obtained the goods he provided to the Lowreys from Levy and Franks and that their association facilitated his participation in the commercial arena. He no doubt proved his trustworthiness and skill to their satisfaction, for by the time Levy died in 1753, Joseph Simon was a partner in Levy and Franks's business.³²

²⁹ Simon's name was included on a list of congregants who were charged a tax, which was "to be paid by every person that congregates with us, [living] either in town or country [*sic*] that is capable of paying." See "The Earliest Extant Minute Books of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Shearith Israel, in New York, 1728–1786," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 21 (1913): 53; Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 33; Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 4, 8, 12; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 99; Diane E. Wenger, *A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania: Creating Economic Networks in Early America, 1790–1807* (University Park, PA, 2008), 36.

³⁰ Even Nathan Levy and David Franks spent time as agents and factors before starting their business in Philadelphia. And even though they were kin, they each spent time operating a business before they were satisfied that the other would make a responsible and honest partner.

³¹ I have found no documents confirming their earliest interactions; several secondary sources assert that their association began in 1744 but do not cite original sources. See Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 10; Henry Bouquet, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet* (Harrisburg, PA, 1984), 3:160n7; William H. Egle, "The Constitutional Convention of 1776," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 4 (1881): 90–91; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 115.

³² On Levy's death, see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nathan Levy death announcement, Dec. 27, 1753. Simon and Henry signed a document as the "surviving partners in the partnership of Levy and Franks," July 6, 1754, in Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 31–32.

The 1740s and 1750s saw a few other Jews, predominantly Ashkenazim, settling in Lancaster and its neighboring towns. They all opened country stores. Levy (until he died in 1753) and Franks and, later, Joseph Simon supplied them with goods.³³ Joseph Solomon and his relative Haim Solomon Bunn settled in Lancaster in 1744 and 1746 respectively. Each first spent time in New York. Many others—including Samson Lazarus, Israel Jacobs, Myer Josephson, Myer Hart, Benjamin and Lyon Nathan, Jacob Levi, Barnet (sometimes spelled Barnett or Barnard in records) Jacobs (or Jacob), and David Levi—set up shops in the towns that speckled the Philadelphia backcountry.³⁴ This pattern diverges from that of Sephardic “Port Jews” who inhabited urban centers and engaged in maritime trade. Many members of this Ashkenazi community set themselves up in the countryside, obtaining goods from Philadelphia colleagues and serving the rural population.³⁵

The life of Jacob Henry (formerly Jacob Bloch) provides more specific detail about the ways in which newcomers became established and how they spread word about the opportunities in the area and sometimes

³³ Mark Häberlein and Michaela Schmälz-Häberlein, in “Competition and Cooperation: The Ambivalent Relationship between Jews and Christians in Early Modern Germany and Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (2002): 409–36, argue that some Jews settled in Lancaster because of the large number of German speakers who lived there. Most of the German speakers who migrated to North America in the eighteenth century came from small towns and villages in southwestern Germany, “a politically and confessionally fragmented area without a dominating cultural center” (416). Germans in Pennsylvania would have been familiar with this pattern of cooperation, and they would have been accustomed to dealing with Jewish traders. For Jews who settled in the region, being able to communicate with their German neighbors was an advantage. But most of them formed alliances with English speakers, even if many of the customers in their stores were Germans.

³⁴ On Lazarus, see Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 4; on Israel Jacobs, see Aviva Ben-Ur, “The Exceptional and the Mundane: A Biographical Portrait of Rebecca (Machado) Phillips,” in *Textures and Meanings: Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*, ed. L. Ehrlich et al. (Amherst, MA, 2004); on Josephson, see multiple letters from Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Gratz Family (Philadelphia) Papers, P-8, American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), New York and Boston (copies in Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA), and Henry Joseph Collection, AJA; Advertisement, *Pennsylvanische Berichte*, July 1758, May 25, 1759, July 6, 1759; on Hart, see Gustavus N. Hart, “Notes on Myer Hart and Other Jews of Easton, Pennsylvania,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 8 (1900): 127–33; on Nathans and Barnet Jacobs, see Wenger, *A Country Store in Pennsylvania*; for Franks’s association with Jewish newcomers, see David Franks, index of accounts, 1756, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS; see also Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, and Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*.

³⁵ Bernardini and Fiering, *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe*; Cesarani, *Port Jews*; Cesarani and Romain, *Jews and Port Cities: 1590–1990*; Lois Dubin, “Introduction: Port Jews in the Atlantic World”; Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*; Kagan and Morgan, *Atlantic Diasporas*; David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes toward a Social Type,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999): 87–97. These stores were important features of the towns and villages that speckled the Pennsylvania backcountry. See Wenger, *A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania*. Eric L. Goldstein identifies this Ashkenazi trend in the Maryland backcountry. This development was an extension of the Pennsylvania pattern. See Goldstein, *Traders and Transports: The Jews of Colonial Maryland* (Baltimore, 1993).

prompted kin to follow. Jacob Henry and his brother Solomon left their home in Langendorf, Silesia, in the 1740s. Solomon settled in London, and Jacob made his way to Philadelphia, where he secured his position with Levy and Franks. Later letters show that Solomon Henry knew David Franks's kin in London, and it is likely that one of them introduced Jacob Henry to David Franks and organized the clerkship.³⁶ In spite of the meager pay, a clerkship with a merchant such as Franks was a valuable opportunity, for it enabled Henry to acquire experience and to build relationships with Franks's colleagues. In his capacity as Franks's clerk, he signed the document that attests to Simon's inclusion in Levy and Franks's partnership.³⁷ By 1754, Henry had saved some money and was preparing to leave Franks's employ. More importantly, he had developed relationships with Franks's colleagues and built up a reputation that would enable him to get credit.³⁸

Henry arranged for his cousin Barnard Gratz to replace him as Franks's clerk. This was a boon for Gratz, who, following in the footsteps of his cousins, departed his home in Silesia in 1748, spent time in Holland and London, and arrived in Philadelphia in 1754. Gratz worked for David Franks from February 1754 until July 1759, earning £21 per year, plus board and lodging.³⁹ When Gratz left Franks's employ in 1759, he opened a store in Philadelphia, stocked with goods that he purchased from Franks's London-based brother Moses, an eminent merchant. He also began investing in some ventures together with Franks, who was clearly pleased with his performance as a clerk, and Joseph Simon began using him as his Philadelphia agent.⁴⁰ Before leaving his job with Franks, Gratz received

³⁶ See Solomon Henry's letters, Dec. 6, 1757, Dec. 20, 1759, Feb. 16, 1760, box 1, folder 23, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 9. Later letters indicate relationships with members of the Franks, Adolphus, Hart, Levy, Pollack, and Samuel families. All of them belonged to London's Great Synagogue, which served the Ashkenazi community. See also Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 9. On the Great Synagogue, see Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue: London 1690–1940* (London, 1950).

³⁷ Agreement with Lowreys, July 6, 1754, in Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 31–32.

³⁸ Henry planned to return to Langendorf for a visit and then to stop in London to purchase a cargo of goods to bring back to Philadelphia. Solomon Henry to his parents, Shebat 14, 5523 [Feb. 14, 1763], Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA [originals in AJHS].

³⁹ Barnard Gratz account with David Franks, 1756–1760, box 2, folder 64, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; [Barnard Gratz's Day Book] David Franks Account Book 1757–1762, box 11, Frank M. Etting Collection (Collection 0193), HSP. (This item is mislabeled. It was Barnard Gratz's day book.) Byars asserts that Gratz worked for Franks until July 1758, but Gratz's account with Franks shows an additional period of time. See also Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 6, 9–13.

⁴⁰ Barnard Gratz to Solomon Henry, Nov. 20, 1758, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Joseph Simon to Barnard Gratz, Mar. 15, 1761, Barnard Gratz

word that his brother Michael, who had spent the preceding eight years in Berlin, Amsterdam, London, and India, was contemplating a move to Philadelphia.⁴¹ Barnard suggested that Michael “[live] here at Mr David Franks’s in my place. He could learn the business of this country by staying with [Franks] 2 or 3 years.”⁴² Barnard Gratz believed that serving as Franks’s clerk was the best course, but if Michael opted not to work for Franks, he might otherwise “content himself with living in the Country,” like other Jewish immigrants who opened country stores.

As newcomers settled in and began to make a stable living, they, in turn, took on Jewish employees, giving them the opportunity to learn the business. Myer Josephson, for example, served as Moses Heyman’s clerk in Reading when he first arrived in about 1756. In 1758, he announced that he would be opening his own store.⁴³ He purchased leather, blankets, buttons, sugar, glue, and a variety of fabrics from Franks, Simon, and, later, the Gratzes, and he sent them goods that he procured locally, such as flaxseed, rye, wheat, corn, fruit, wax, tallow, calfskin, and lard, as well as any skins he was able to procure from Indian traders. In 1764, Josephson asked Barnard Gratz to send him one of the “Jews who came to you.”⁴⁴ There is no other information about these Jews, but they likely arrived in the port of Philadelphia and sought out Jews who were already settled, or perhaps Gratz or another colleague brought them out as indentured servants. There were certainly some individuals who found their way to the area that way.⁴⁵

to Joseph Simon, Apr. 3, 1760, Joseph Simon to Barnard Gratz, Aug. 29, 1762, box 1, folder 47, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; David Franks to Michael Gratz, June 12, 1763, box 1, folder 17, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Barnard Gratz account with David Franks, McAllister Collection, LCP; [Barnard Gratz’s day book] David Franks account book 1757–1762, box 11, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP.

⁴¹ Michael Gratz to Barnard Gratz, undated; see also Michael Gratz to Hyman and Jonathan [Gratz], ca. 1758, Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA [originals at AJHS]; Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 10–13.

⁴² Barnard Gratz to Solomon Henry, Nov. 20, 1758, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

⁴³ Myer Josephson told Michael Gratz on Feb. 10, 1763, Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA, that he would be going to Philadelphia soon to be naturalized; Advertisement, *Pennsylvanische Berichte*, July 8, 1758.

⁴⁴ Myer Josephson to Barnard Gratz, Shushan Purim, 5524 [Feb. 18, 1764], box 1, folder 3, Gratz Family Papers, P-8, AJHS.

⁴⁵ New York merchant Jonas Phillips, who settled in Philadelphia during the revolution, first arrived in North America in 1756 as an indentured servant to Sephardic Jew Moses Lindo of Charleston, South Carolina. See July 13, 1773, affidavit, Misc. Correspondence and Documents, Jonas Phillips Papers, AJA. A few records show that some Jews came as indentured servants during the period discussed in this article and later. In 1764, Myer Josephson referred to his female “Jewish servant”; see Myer Josephson to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 1, 5534 [1764], Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA. On Sept. 7, 1770, Michael Gratz signed a bond to the owners of the *Dolphin* promising to pay for the passage of

Josephson instructed Gratz, "Wages must not begin too high, because he is still strange in the business in the cities here." If the clerk proved that he "knows his business," Josephson told Gratz, he would "give him a store on half-profits."⁴⁶ If a newcomer proved himself to be diligent and ambitious he could be an additional node in a network, and someone who would help an established trader to expand. Both could benefit.

Josephson's letter lays bare the significance of Jews' bonds. Even while proposing his plan to Gratz for his prospective clerk, Josephson had a non-Jewish clerk working for him. "He is with me on trial to learn the business, can have him for nothing for years and is a good Gentile. Have not yet made an agreement with him and is on trial here on his side and mine." Josephson was more inclined to install a coreligionist in another store earning a share of the profits. Perhaps this was because a Jewish newcomer rarely had the advantages that Josephson's gentile clerk had: a father ("he is Isaac Lewer's son") who secured the position with Josephson for his son, and capital (he was "worth more than I, and perhaps £2000 and more") with which to get started.⁴⁷ Or perhaps he felt that Jews were trustworthy because of membership in the community they were building. Their network fostered greater accountability through their layers of connections with one another and their frequent communications.

There are other cases of established merchants and traders providing opportunities for newcomers. Joseph Simon, for example, employed his nephew Levy Andrew Levy, who arrived from London, and they later became partners.⁴⁸ In addition to employing Jacob Henry and the Gratzes, David Franks funded Michael Moses's tallow chandlery and soap boiling

Joseph Solomon on board the brig; see Michael Gratz bond, Sept. 7, 1770, box 2, folder 48, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP. David Brener suggests that this Joseph Solomon was the one who had been in Lancaster since the 1740s and who was Joseph Simon's wife's uncle. Due to Solomon's absence from the Lancaster tax records in 1769, Brener concludes that Solomon took a trip to London in 1769–70 and that Michael Gratz paid for his return passage. But there were several cases of Jews with overlapping names, and it is more likely that Michael Gratz paid passage for a newcomer who would serve him in some capacity. Brener's Joseph Solomon would have been about sixty years old at the time. See *Jews of Lancaster*, 4–5. See also Isaac Solomon indenture to Aaron Levy, Jan. 4, 1788, box 3, folder 2, Edwin Wolf Collection of American Jewish Historical Documents, HSP. Dutch Jew Philip Marks ran away from his gentile master, John Raser, in 1775; see runaway advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 29, 1775. Goldstein, *Traders and Transports*, 4, 26–37, notes that there were Jews who were brought to the colonies as convict-servants.

⁴⁶ Myer Josephson to Barnard Gratz, Shushan Purim, 5524 [Feb. 18, 1764], Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, SC-4292, AJA.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Levy reflected back on his time in Lancaster and his relationship with Simon. Levy Andrew Levy to Michael Gratz, May 16, 1784, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS; Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 10.

business. No other information is available about Moses or his relationship with Franks, but he presumably was a skilled artisan, and Franks likely had some connection to, or reliable information about, him.⁴⁹ Likewise, Joseph Simon made Mordecai Moses Mordecai a partner in a distillery.⁵⁰ Once the Gratzes were better established, they took on Jewish clerks, showing their charges the ropes as Franks had done for them.

Approximately thirty Jewish men settled in Philadelphia and its environs in the 1740s and 1750s, and another few arrived each year until 1776. Many of them interacted in commerce. Not everyone was lucky enough to get a position with a seasoned merchant or even with a shopkeeper. Another way to get a foot in the door was to acquire a consignment of goods to sell on commission or, if a person had some cash, to purchase goods to resell. Neither of these arrangements was as beneficial as a clerkship, especially for someone with few resources and little experience, as Moses Mordecai soon discovered. Mordecai began to purchase trade goods from his Philadelphia colleagues to sell to rural customers. He ran into trouble when he purchased leather that he struggled to sell. His friend and colleague Myer Josephson informed Barnard Gratz, “Mr Mordecai bought too much leather . . . The leather is too light—I have known for a long time that light leather sells poorly.” Josephson saw this episode as a rite of passage. “Mordecai has to be patient, he is a new merchant and has to pay his tuition—he will learn.”⁵¹ This is precisely why Barnard Gratz had recommended that his brother take up the position as Franks’s clerk. It was important to acquire as much knowledge about commerce as possible; even if a coreligionist offered an initial opportunity, newcomers would soon have to make do on their own.

The community’s growth was partly due to the fact that word spread in the Jewish Atlantic about migrants’ destinations and their success stories, encouraging chain migration. Just as Barnard Gratz followed Jacob Henry

⁴⁹ Articles of Agreement, Jan. 1, 1757, box 3, folder 133, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; see also Stern, *David Franks*, 32.

⁵⁰ Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 12. It is not clear when this partnership began—whether it was Mordecai’s first experience in Pennsylvania or whether he took up this line of work after failing in trade. There is some confusion due to the fact that there was both a Moses Mordecai and a Mordecai Moses Mordecai. The former, from Bonn, Germany, died in 1781 and was buried in Philadelphia. Mordecai Moses Mordecai, from Tels, Lithuania, died in 1809 and was buried in Baltimore. While some documents were specific, others refer to “Mr. Mordecai,” making it difficult to differentiate between the two. See Malcolm Stern, “Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 57 (1967): 24–25, 27–51.

⁵¹ Myer Josephson to Barnard Gratz, Dec. 9, 5522 [1761], box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA.

and Michael followed Barnard, the Gratzes' cousins Levy, Henry, and Lipman Marks also made their way to Philadelphia.⁵² Newcomers usually departed for Pennsylvania after a sojourn in London, where many poor fortune-seekers, attuned to news of economic opportunities, swelled the Ashkenazi community. In 1763, Barnard Gratz received a letter from Zebi Hirsh bar Moses, who had resolved to go to Philadelphia. He claimed to be a relative and informed Gratz of his intention to go to Philadelphia. Moses did not have a prearranged job like the Gratzes did, but like many other migrants he was on the lookout for possibilities. He asked for information about "what goods sell there for the best prices," as he was planning on bringing a consignment of goods with him. Moses complained that Gratz had ignored his first attempt to make contact. He assured Gratz that he was merely asking for advice, that he had no intention of relying on his goodwill, and that he knew someone who had promised to give him credit of £200. He tried to shame Gratz, evoking their kinship relationship and the obligations that went along with it: "Did not think you were such bad friends to me. If I had tried this with a stranger I should have received the information. I don't beg for anything nor that you present me with anything."⁵³ Moses's first letter does not survive. It is possible that Gratz never received it, but it is also possible that he was unwilling or unable to help and disregarded it. When Barnard was in London a few years later, a young man approached him, also claiming to be a relative. "He wants to Goe to amarica," Barnard told Michael. "[A]s I Don't know who he is I told him not Goe as I Do not know what he Could Do there. I gave him a Guinia & told him he must try what he Can Do here."⁵⁴

Barnard's wariness can be explained by the fact that penniless migrants arrived in every Atlantic community and often became a burden to the community. A year before Barnard was approached in London, "Jacob Musqueto, an object of Charity," had arrived in New York from St. Eustatius and had "Thrown himself on the Mercy of the Sedaka [charity fund], Imploring Some Assistance." The board of New York's synagogue Shearith Israel resolved to pay for his board while in New York, to send him to Philadelphia en route

⁵² Myer Josephson to Barnard Gratz, Oct. 11, 1764, sends congratulations to "your relative Lipman whose wedding . . . will be in one week," box 2, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA. See also Myer Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Iyar 29 [May 16], 1768, box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA; Michael Gratz, Will, June 15, 1765, Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 74–75.

⁵³ Zebi Hirsch bar Moses to Barnard Gratz, Adar 19, 5523 [Mar. 4, 1763], Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA.

⁵⁴ Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, Aug. 10, 1769, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

to Barbados, and to “write a letter to Mr. Michael Gratz . . . Requesting he could Collect Sufficient among the Yahudim [Jews] at Phila as would defray the Expence of the Same.”⁵⁵ Personal connections came with greater obligations and could become a liability.

There was not only a risk that someone would be a burden. Some new arrivals turned out to be scoundrels, like a well-dressed young man who arrived in Lancaster on horseback with a letter of introduction to Levy Andrew Levy. In the letter, Joseph Samson, a Jew residing in Philadelphia, explained that the young man was Levy’s relative and that he was “a good craftsman, namely, in hairdressing and barbering and wig making.” Samson expected that “he will earn his livelihood here with great honor,” but he needed “something to start with.” In other words, he was asking for money. Levy’s uncle Joseph Simon “gives to strangers,” Samson asserted, and since the young man was Levy’s relative, “[b]earer of this has preference over strangers.” He assured Levy that the man was “no gambler, nor is he a drunkard. He has a wife and two children in London.” Samson also set forth his own credentials (and believability) by claiming to have spent time with the Gratzes and sending his regards to several members of Lancaster’s Jewish community.⁵⁶ Samson’s plea highlights Jews’ connections and the sense of obligation that these connections implied. But these factors made them vulnerable too, and, indeed, Samson’s ward turned out to be a rogue. When Levy and Simon “looked at him carefully in the light,” they recognized him as the forlorn man who had arrived in Lancaster a mere two weeks earlier asking for help from the Jews who lived there. At that time, several men took pity and gave him money. “So we were surprised now to see him in such swell clothes,” Simon told the Gratzes. Simon told the man to “clear out” that evening. Innkeeper Matthias Slough, Simon’s neighbor and partner in some ventures, let the scoundrel and his companion stay overnight, in spite of the fact that Simon alerted him about the dissembler, who then “paid him for his goodness With counterfeit money.”⁵⁷

Simon tapped network communication channels to warn his colleagues about the rogue. All merchants—Jews and gentiles—used these means to monitor others and to curtail misconduct. Merchants and traders main-

⁵⁵ Entry for May 16, 1768, in “From the 2nd Volume of Minute Books of the Congn: Shearith Israel in New York,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 21 (1913): 99.

⁵⁶ Joseph Samson to Levy Andrew Levy, Kislev 2, 5532 [Nov. 9, 1771], with translation, box 2, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA.

⁵⁷ Joseph Simon to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Kislev 6, 5532 [Nov. 13, 1771], Gratz-Sulzberger Papers, AJA.

tained frequent communication, and they shared information about dishonest or even incompetent associates. While the network that Jews in the region built facilitated opportunities to engage in trade, it also allowed them to warn one another of dishonesty. Jews also used other means to regulate associates. They terminated joint ventures, withdrew support, and used legal institutions at their disposal in order to protect their own interests. In 1762, when country storekeeper Barnet Jacobs did not pay his substantial debts, David Franks, Mathias Bush, Benjamin Levy, and Barnard Gratz, to whom he owed a total of almost £1,000, sued him.⁵⁸ In 1760, David Franks, Barnard Gratz, and Moses Heyman, together with a group of gentile merchants, placed an advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* offering a reward for the apprehension of Myer Levy, who had absconded with goods they had provided for him to sell on commission. Their bonds notwithstanding, Jews did not hesitate either to suspend relationships with people who could undermine their interests or to alert colleagues to associates who could not be trusted.

Historian William Pencak argues that “[r]espectable Jews were worried that the presence of such newcomers would compromise the favorable reputation they had carefully cultivated among the gentile population,” and that they therefore sought to ostracize scoundrels such as the visitor to Lancaster.⁵⁹ In the case of Myer Levy, he suggests that the Jews in the group sought to protect their reputations as Jews and to curtail any antisemitism that the incident might have provoked. But Jews experienced very little anti-Jewish sentiment. In fact, they dealt extensively with non-Jews and formed long-term relationships with a host of colleagues who were not Jewish. Their ethno-religious identity was never a barrier to full inclusion in the economic milieu. Jewish merchants and traders’ careful and practical approach to business was a far more compelling reason for their actions. The fact that the newspaper advertisement identified Levy as a Jew suggests that they were not concerned about any repercussions. In fact, a survey of business correspondence, journals, and advertisements shows that contemporaries commonly identified individuals as Jewish, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, German, Quaker,

⁵⁸ [Barnard Gratz’s day book] David Franks account book 1757–1762, box 11, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 101; Wenger, *Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania*, 39.

⁵⁹ Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America*, 197.

⁶⁰ For other examples of ethnic or religious identifications, see William Murray to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Apr. 24, 1769, Ohio Company Papers, vol. 1, box 58, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, July 27, 1770, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS; George

Moravian, and the like.⁶⁰ Such episodes rather underscore the fact that Jewish merchants and traders did not hesitate to act against wayward colleagues. They could afford to be public in their actions because very little anti-Jewish sentiment existed.

Jews did not automatically trust coreligionists; there were too many risks associated with commerce to be uncritically trusting. As Francesca Trivellato argues, “the equation of ethno-diasporic communities with trust gives the false impression that one (trust) was a byproduct of the other (community).”⁶¹ Commonalities facilitated economic cooperation between Jews, which led to trust. An established trader or merchant had to be cautious because commonalities did not necessarily engender honorable behavior. To become trusted, newcomers had to demonstrate “honesty, industry & good nature & no pride,” as Barnard Gratz warned his brother Michael before he arrived in Philadelphia. In fact, he went so far as to say that if Michael “thinks himself wise enough & refuses to take advice of Cousin Jacob & myself, then let him do what he pleases—I would not advise him to come here, as it would give me much pain & uneasiness.”⁶² Honesty and diligence were the qualities that merchants looked for in their colleagues, whether they were Jewish or not, and they expected newcomers to show humility and deference too.

Jews’ bonds and their sense of community did not ensure ongoing economic association, but their commonalities did give them access to one another, and economic interactions—when they cooperated in commercial undertakings—knit many of them together. Most of the earliest Jewish immigrants formed an association with David Franks when they first arrived.⁶³ The Gratzes developed business relationships with many of the same people and added others who slowly enlarged the community as they settled in the region. In fact, Michael Gratz’s ledger from his earliest commercial ventures in Philadelphia emphasizes that newcomers depended on coreligionists when they first arrived. Gratz brought a cargo of goods with him when he first made his way to Philadelphia in 1759, purchased

Croghan to Barnard Gratz, Sept. 8, 1773, Croghan-Gratz Papers, vol. 1, box 55, folder 33, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; James Kenny Journal, HSP; also published in John W. Jordan, “Journal to Ye Westward, 1758–1759,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 37 (1913): 405. William Black identified Nathan Levy as “a Jew, and very Considerable Merch’t.” He described a convivial evening in Levy’s home and admired his sister Hettie. See Brock, “Journal of William Black, 1744,” 415.

⁶¹ Trivellato, “Sephardic Merchants,” 102; on trust see also Haggerty, “*Merely for Money*”?, 66–96.

⁶² Barnard Gratz to Solomon Henry, Nov. 20, 1758, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP, also in Byars, *B. & M. Gratz*, 36–37.

⁶³ David Franks index of accounts, 1756, “Address Book,” ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

with profits from his ventures in India. During his first three years living in Philadelphia, his customers were almost exclusively Jews who had stores in Philadelphia and the surrounding towns.⁶⁴

Successful associations opened doors to other associations. Once newcomers built their credit and reputation, they expanded their network to include both scores of non-Jewish associates and Jews living further afield, especially in New York and Newport, Rhode Island. The Gratzes' cousin Jacob Henry, for example, developed relationships with Isaac Hart of Newport and Samuel Hart of New York.⁶⁵ Once they had built up their business, the Gratzes interacted increasingly with the Harts and their colleague, Myer Pollock of Rhode Island, as well as with Isaac Adolphus, Jonas Phillips, Moses Hays, Myer Myers, and Samson and Solomon Simson, all of New York. Notably, almost all of the Jewish names that feature in their records were Ashkenazi, including their colleagues from New York and Newport and the few associates in London with whom they began to build relationships.⁶⁶ Rather than integrating into established Sephardi networks, they created their own.

As the area's merchants and traders enmeshed their economic interests by sponsoring one another, providing goods on credit and consignments and partnering in business ventures, many of them also knit their

⁶⁴ [Barnard Gratz's day book] David Franks account book 1757–1762, box 11, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Barnard Gratz account with David Franks, 1757–1760, box 2, folder 64, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Gratz ledger, 1759, vol. 19, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Michael Gratz account book, 1759–1762, box 73, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Gratz accounts, 1760–1768, box 73, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP.

⁶⁵ Jacob Henry to David Franks, July 11, 1760, and Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 1, 1761, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; and Samuel Hart to Jacob Franks, Feb. 19, 1761, box 3, folder 135, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁶⁶ Ashkenazim had made their way to other Atlantic world centers, including New York and Newport, both of which were home to communities that were established and dominated by Sephardim. Surviving documents show minimal business exchange between Philadelphia's Ashkenazi merchants and Sephardim. One notable exception is a partnership that the Gratzes formed with a Mr. Penha and the brothers Isaac and Elias Rodriguez Miranda from Curaçao. This was coordinated after Michael Gratz met Penha (or Pennia) on one of his frequent business trips to New York and Penha introduced him to the Mirandas. (Penha and the Mirandas were Portuguese speakers; Michael Gratz was able to speak Portuguese, probably from his time in India.) New York's Sephardic community was closely tied to Curaçao's through kinship and trade networks. For a period of about three years the Gratzes exchanged goods, but trade conditions rendered the partnership unprofitable, and it came to an end. Isaac Adolphus to Michael Gratz, June 25, 1764, box 1, folder 1, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Isaac Rodriguez Miranda to Barnard Gratz, July 30, 1764, box 1, folder 45, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Michael Gratz to Barnard Gratz, Apr. 22, 1765, and Elias and Isaac Rodriguez Miranda to Barnard Gratz, July 1765, box 67, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Wim Klooster, "Jews in Suriname and Curaçao," in Barnardini and Fiering, *Jews and the Expansion of Europe*, 354.

families together through marriages. Marriages were a strategic way for merchants to reinforce their relationships. Joseph Simon married Rosa Bunn, the daughter of Haim Solomon Bunn, who went to Lancaster from New York. Bunn's first cousin, Rebecca Mears (or Myers-Cohen), was married to Mathias Bush of Philadelphia. Barnard Gratz married her sister, Richea Mears. The Mears sisters were the daughters of New York merchant Samson Mears.⁶⁷ It was at the time that Barnard Gratz married Richea Mears that Joseph Simon began using him as his agent in Philadelphia; the Gratzes' interests became increasingly intertwined with Simon's after Michael Gratz married Simon's daughter Miriam in 1769. Simon would not have corrupted his business affairs by including the Gratzes just because they were kin. Rather, he approved of these marriages because the Gratzes had proved themselves in business. Their respective marriages represented the beginnings of a kinship network that linked Simon and his nephew Levy Andrew Levy, the New York Myers-Cohen family, the Gratzes, and their cousin Solomon Henry in London, whose brother Jacob died in 1761.

Only a few hints of other similar situations survive, although there is evidence that most Jewish men who settled in the region married Jewish women. One woman, Clara, came from New York to marry Barnet Jacobs of Heidelberg amid unspecified suspicions that Michael Gratz and some of his colleagues harbored about her. Mordecai Moses Mordecai nevertheless insisted, "she is a good match for him to marry in every way," noting that "it is an advantage for all his creditors. She can be of help to him in his business. She will be better for him than other girls." Mordecai's own marriage to Easton merchant Myer Hart's sister-in-law promised to be a benefit. Mordecai was negotiating an agreement with Michael Gratz in 1761 when both men were newcomers and still likely employed by Joseph Simon and David Franks respectively. Simon advised that Barnard Gratz should "speak to Myer Hart to [Mordecai's] best advantage."⁶⁸

Most Jews avoided marrying out of the faith, but unions between Ashkenazim and Sephardim were also unusual. This was partly because Sephardic merchants occupied a higher status than most Ashkenazim, but

⁶⁷ Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 1, 1761, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 11; Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 37–39.

⁶⁸ Mordecai Moses Mordecai to Barnard Gratz, Oct. 1761, in Stern, "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania," 37–38. An indenture dated May 7, 1762, records that Barnard Jacobs's wife was Clare. See folder 1, Lancaster County Records from Office of Recorder of Deeds, SC-6574, AJA.

it was also because of the two groups' complicated differences. For the few Ashkenazim who had achieved a high status, David Franks most notably, the shortage of marriageable Jewish women—women whose families enjoyed wealth and high status—was even greater. Franks married Margaret Evans, the daughter of Peter Evans, register general of Pennsylvania and vestryman at Christ Church. Evans had connections to many of Philadelphia's elite families, including the Penn family. While Franks cooperated in business with a number of the Jewish immigrants in the region, he did not socialize with them. His status, his access to Philadelphia's elite, and his Christian family placed him in elite social circles, which were closed to Jewish newcomers who were still establishing themselves.⁶⁹

In marriages, Jews' economic, social, and religious realms converged. Traditional Judaism sees marriage as a contractual bond commanded by God, and it is intricately tied up with religious observance.⁷⁰ In early Philadelphia, marriage therefore helped provide a framework that supported religious observance. Especially during the first three decades, Jews had to set up almost every other aspect of observance, and they often had to improvise. Necessity forced Nathan Levy, the first Jew to settle in the area, to obtain a land grant from Thomas Penn for a burial ground when his wife or child died.⁷¹ A cemetery was the first step toward building Jewish institutions in any location in Europe and the Atlantic world, enabling Jews to bury their dead separately.⁷² Almost a decade later, Joseph Simon and Isaac Nunes Henriques acquired land in Lancaster for a cemetery.⁷³

⁶⁹There were a few cases of intermarriage between Ashkenazim and Sephardim and of men who married Christian women. A dearth of eligible partners was often a reason, and in some cases, as with David Franks, marriage to a Christian from a prominent family improved a Jew's status and opened up economic opportunities. See Gelles, *Letters of Abigail Levy Franks*, 140n1; Thomas H. Montgomery, "List of Vestrymen of Christ Church, Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 19 (1895): 521; Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles*, 176; Stern, *David Franks*, 14; Thomas Wendel, "The Keith-Lloyd Alliance: Factional and Coalition Politics in Colonial Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1968): 297. Benjamin Moses Clava also married a non-Jew; see Manuel Josephson and Joseph Wolf Carpeles on behalf of Kahal Kadosh Mikveh Israel (KKMI) to Saul Lowenstamm, Mar. 20, 1785, in Stern, "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania," 45–46.

⁷⁰The Talmud, the oral law, dictates the nature of the relationship.

⁷¹Two years later, Levy acquired an additional, larger plot on Spruce Street, between Eighth and Ninth Streets. See Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 24–25, 53; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 1:323. In 1740, Levy buried another loved one; see Abigail Levy Franks to Naphtali Franks, Sept. 6, 1741, in Gelles, *Letters of Abigail Levy Franks*, 94–97, 96n5. In 1765 Mathias Bush secured additional land adjoining the Spruce Street lot to accommodate the needs of the growing community. See Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 24–25, 53; Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, 1:323.

⁷²Sarna, *American Judaism*, 10.

⁷³Brener, *Jews of Lancaster*, 4–5; Henry Necarsulmer, "The Early Jewish Settlement in Lancaster, Pennsylvania," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1901): 42–44.

Even in the absence of a formal synagogue, and even when their small numbers and lack of communal supports complicated their efforts, many of them strove to observe their faith and to uphold their heritage.

The lack of a synagogue would not have precluded worship; Jews could pray on their own or in small groups. Scholars have asserted that those who lived in Philadelphia during the 1740s met for prayer in a house on Sterling Alley, but no documentary evidence exists.⁷⁴ Surviving records confirm the names of only ten Jewish men living in both Philadelphia and Lancaster. Two clusters likely gathered in the homes of community members, but even if there were a few others, their small number and the distances that separated them would have made it difficult to consistently assemble a *minyan*, or quorum of ten men required for certain prayers, including the prayers recited just before reading the Torah—the centerpiece of the Sabbath service. Some of them sometimes made use of New York’s synagogue during the 1740s—probably when they were visiting New York for business, but perhaps because they traveled there intentionally for important holidays. In 1747, Shearith Israel instituted a tax “to be paid by every person that congregates with us, [living] either in town or country that is capable of paying.” David Franks, Nathan Levy, Levy’s brother Sampson, and Joseph Simon were all charged. Likewise, Mathias Bush was charged a fee in 1748.⁷⁵ Others from Pennsylvania who could not afford to pay the fee might have attended too. In addition to linking them to the broader Jewish community, New York’s synagogue served a need that was not yet fulfilled in Pennsylvania. Jews in the area had to coordinate their own individual and communal practice.

Over the course of the 1750s an informal group likely assembled more consistently in Philadelphia, and perhaps another in Lancaster. Jacob Henry, who had spent some time in Newport and New York, wrote in 1761, “I am told there is Great & Mighty news with you at Philad.a.” He

⁷⁴ The earliest histories of Philadelphia’s Jewish community repeat this detail, but they do not cite original documents. Rather, they cite earlier histories. No primary source material has come to light to confirm this. There is evidence that ten Jewish men lived in and around Philadelphia, but they were dispersed and could not have gathered on a regular basis. Some of them might not have observed. There is no evidence that David Franks, for example, ever participated in any kind of Jewish observance in Philadelphia. He was married to a Christian woman. There may indeed have been others Jews in Philadelphia at the time. Hyman Pollock Rosenbach, *The Jews in Philadelphia prior to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1883); Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1436; Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia*, 11; Wolf and Whiteman, *Jews of Philadelphia*, 32.

⁷⁵ “Earliest Extant Minute Books of Shearith Israel,” 53, 58.

was referring to the rumor that his Jewish associates were taking steps to build a synagogue. By that time, between thirty to forty Jewish men had settled in the region. Those living in the small towns did not visit Philadelphia frequently, and only when “business Call[ed].”⁷⁶ The number in Philadelphia itself must have been sufficient for them to consider such a move. Still, Henry expressed surprise: “I cou’d hardly have though[t] 7 month[s] ago that the Same would be Talk’d of this 24 years to come.” Henry pressed Barnard Gratz for more information, asking “whether the [synagogue] is to be Hambro, Pragg, or Poland Fation [fashion].”⁷⁷ Members of the community were from diverse locations in central and eastern Europe, and each community of origin followed its own liturgical customs. We can assume from his question that individuals took turns leading prayer services, each following the liturgy he knew best. It is noteworthy, however, that Henry took for granted that the congregation would follow an Ashkenazi tradition, another indication of the unique character of this community compared with other North American communities, which were founded and dominated by Sephardim and followed Sephardic liturgy. Henry suggested that “it will be best after the old mode of Pennsylvania.” Like the Quakers who had no paid ministers, Henry believed that Philadelphia’s Jews should continue to lead services themselves. A cleric was not a requirement, and anyone who knew the liturgy could lead. That way, Henry suggested, “the expences are not Great.”⁷⁸

It is unclear whether Henry expected a formal building, which did not materialize, or merely steps taken to better organize themselves. For the most part, things continued as they had, except for the notable acquisition of a Torah scroll that Joseph Simon, Matthias Bush, Moses Mordecai, Barnard Gratz, Moses Heyman, and Myer Josephson borrowed from the synagogue in New York. Since they lived in different places, it is unclear whether the scroll was to be kept in Philadelphia, Lancaster, or Reading.⁷⁹ The receipt, however, attests to the fact that they colluded in their efforts

⁷⁶ Levy Andrew Levy to Michael Gratz, Dec. 8, 1766, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

⁷⁷ Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 7, 1761, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁷⁸ Jacob Henry to Barnard Gratz, Jan. 7, 1761, box 1, folder 22, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Jonathan Sarna, email to author, Apr. 3, 2014.

⁷⁹ Receipt for Torah scroll borrowed from Shearith Israel in New York, Elul 9, 5521 [Sept. 8, 1761], written in Hebrew and signed by Joseph Simon, Matthias Bush, Moses Mordecai, Barnard Gratz, Moses Heyman, and Myer Josephson, in “Items Relating to Congregation Shearith Israel, New York,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 27 (1920): 20–21. On the centrality of the Torah in Jewish life, see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 10.

to observe, even if the seventy miles separating Philadelphia and Lancaster made it difficult to worship together on a regular basis. A few other details point to their interdependence. In one letter, Myer Josephson of Reading asked Michael Gratz to join him and his Jewish associates living in rural towns outside Philadelphia for their Purim celebration; in another, he informed Gratz that he was going to Lancaster “for Minyan for Yom Kippur,” and he asked Gratz to consider joining him.⁸⁰

The plans to build a synagogue and the acquisition of a Torah scroll signal that the community was becoming sturdier. It was only in 1771, however, that the community rented a building in Cherry Alley that was to be used as its first synagogue. Congregants made arrangements to purchase their own Torah scroll, and Michael and Barnard Gratz, who seem to have assumed leadership, organized to purchase prayer books via friends in London as well as a *yad* (a pointer to be used when reading from the Torah) and *rimonim* (coronets for the Torah) from their colleague and friend in New York, the silversmith Myer Myers.⁸¹ They also began to oversee certain functions, including collecting a charity fund and employing a shochet to serve the community.⁸²

Individuals left other traces of their lived religious practices.⁸³ Many of their observances related to the Jewish calendar, which shapes much of Jewish life, and show that in spite of the predominantly Christian environment, many Jews in and around Philadelphia heeded “Jewish time.” They reveal this cohort’s adherence to its members’ faith, marking their distinctively Jewish ways and differentiating them from their Christian contemporaries.⁸⁴ In some cases their practices reveal their joint efforts, as when they organized a minyan for the holidays; in other cases they acted

⁸⁰ Myer Josephson to Michael Gratz, Adar 6 [Feb. 10], and Sept. 7, 1763, Gratz-Sulzberger Collection, AJA.

⁸¹ Barnard Gratz to Michael Samson, Oct. 15, 1771, and Barnard Gratz to Barnet Jacobs, Oct. 15, 1771, flat file 193, Michael Gratz Letter Book 1769–1772, flat file 193, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Myer Myers to Michael Gratz, Jan. 26, 1772, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Byars, B. & M. Gratz, 121; Fish, Barnard and Michael Gratz, 198; Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 41, 58–59.

⁸² Solomon Marache to Barnard Gratz, Mar. 20, 1774; Agreement between Michael Gratz and Abraham and Ezekiel Levy, June 18, 1776, ser. 1, Gratz Family Papers, APS; see also Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 58.

⁸³ Jonathan Sarna credits historian David Hall for the concept of “lived religion,” in David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ, 1997); see Jonathan Sarna, “Marking Time: Notes from the Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica on How Nineteenth-Century Americans Jews Lived Their Religion,” in *Constellations of Atlantic Jewish History, 1555–1890: The Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica*, ed. Arthur Kiron (Philadelphia, 2014), 49.

⁸⁴ Sarna, “Marking Time,” 49–50.

independently. Even when their actions were solitary, however, they mentioned their efforts to observe to friends, demonstrating their communal spirit and reinforcing their religious bonds and interdependence.

In Judaism, all work is prohibited on certain holidays and on the Sabbath, which begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. Many letters testify to efforts to refrain from work during the Sabbath, like Michael Gratz's rushed report from St. Kitts in 1765 to his brother Barnard. "Being just Shabbat I can say no more," he signed off.⁸⁵ When David McClure, a missionary to the Delaware Indians, wanted to engage in business with Joseph Simon on a Saturday, Simon refused. When it became clear that McClure would not do business the next day—his own Sabbath—Simon asked his non-Jewish neighbor to oversee the transaction for him.⁸⁶ Myer Josephson dated a letter, noting that it was *motz'ai Shabbat*—the end of the Sabbath, or Saturday evening.⁸⁷

Observing festivals required keeping track of the calendar and dates on which holidays fell, since the Jewish calendar follows a lunar cycle and the dates change from year to year relative to the Gregorian calendar. A few surviving calendars and references to homemade calendars from a slightly later period suggest that individuals in this group acquired calendars from elsewhere or created their own, which would have involved "a combination of astronomical and mathematical science, along with cultural and religious interpretations."⁸⁸ Some, most notably Myer Josephson, who usually wrote in Yiddish, dated their letters according to the Hebrew calendar. Barnet Jacobs, the mohel, recorded information about the circumcisions he performed, including the child's and father's Hebrew names and the Hebrew date. There is evidence of some uncertainties and errors. One entry included the Hebrew month and year but omitted the date.

⁸⁵ *Shabbat* is Hebrew for the Sabbath, and Michael Gratz and others always wrote the word in Hebrew. Michael Gratz to Barnard Gratz, July 12, 1765, box 2, folder 64, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; see also Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, July 27, 1770, box 2, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA.

⁸⁶ David McClure, "Lancaster in 1772," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 5 (1901): 108–9. Jonathan Sarna addresses the clash that often occurred between Jewish law and American life; see *American Judaism*, 23–24.

⁸⁷ Myer Josephson to Michael Gratz, Feb. 19, 1763, in Joshua N. Neumann, "Eighteenth-Century American Jewish Letters," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 34 (1937): 83.

⁸⁸ In an undated letter, Issachar Bernard referred to a calendar that he drew up for Barnard Gratz. He either kept track of the dates and drew up his own calendar or made a copy of one that he acquired. See Issachar Bernard to Barnard Gratz, box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA; another example from 1778–79 is a handwritten *lu'ab* (Jewish calendar) compiled by Abraham Eleazer Cohen for the year 5539 in the Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica, University of Pennsylvania Libraries. See Sarna, "Marking Time," 50. Quote in Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 5.

Another entry recorded a date that, according to one historian, was incorrect.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, his records, and others' allusions to specific holidays and festivals, attest to their close attention to the calendar and to their observance of a considerable number of holidays, including minor festivals. Many included wishes for a good holiday in letters written around the time of Passover and the Jewish New Year or wished their associates an easy fast before Yom Kippur. Such messages enabled community members to share the spirit of the holidays even when they could not observe together, including with Jewish colleagues further afield.⁹⁰

Members of this community often planned around the Jewish calendar and used it as a frame of reference. In one letter, Myer Josephson told the Gratzes that he hoped to be in Philadelphia after Hanukkah, and in another he informed them that he planned to visit Philadelphia after Pesach (Passover). The eight days of Passover fell at the end of March and beginning of April that year, and he referred to Passover rather than writing that he would be in Philadelphia in April.⁹¹ In 1775, Barnard Gratz planned to return home in time to celebrate the High Holy Days even though he had not finished attending to his duties in Pittsburgh. "I shall be obliged to go up again after Rosh Hashanah," he told his brother.⁹² The next year, he expected pressing business to keep him in Pittsburgh, but he asked Michael to send his prayer books for Rosh Hashanah and Sukkoth. If there were other Jewish traders in the area, it is doubtful that there were ten of them, sufficient for a minyan, but Gratz made it clear that he planned to mark the days.⁹³

People like Barnard and Michael Gratz were generally unperturbed about highlighting religious differences, and their gentile colleagues tolerated interruptions when they refrained from work. Just as Joseph Simon refused to transact an exchange on the Sabbath, Michael Gratz refused to do any work during the festival Shavuot, or Pentecost. "Moses was on the Top of a Mount upon a sacred expedition in the Month of May," his colleague

⁸⁹ Jacobs recorded the date as Thursday, Ab 6, 5529. According to Malcolm Stern, Thursday was Ab 4 that year, corresponding to July 17, 1760; see "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania," 49.

⁹⁰ Joseph Simon to Barnard Gratz, Mar. 23, 1766, and Michael Gratz to Isaac Hart, Apr. 11, 1769, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Joseph Simon to Michael Gratz, Sept. 17, 1771, box 1, folder 48, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP; Isaac Adolphus to Michael Gratz, Sept. 24, 1765, box 1, folder 1, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁹¹ Myer Josephson to Michael Gratz, Dec. 9, 5522 [1761], Adar 6 [Feb. 10], and Sept. 7, 1763, Gratz-Sulzberger Collection, AJA.

⁹² Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, Sept. 22, 1775, box 1, folder 1, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁹³ Barnard Gratz to Michael Gratz, Aug. 17, 1776, box 1, folder 54, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

William Murray wrote, "Consequently his Followers must for a certain Number of Days cease to provide for the Familys." Murray was frustrated and complained to Barnard that "very little . . . has been done here."⁹⁴ Murray, however, was a trusted associate and friend, and Michael Gratz never feared an anti-Jewish response. Still, his friends and family members sometimes enlisted colleagues' help when observing the Sabbath and festivals prevented them from particular duties. As Charles Matheson, the Gratzes' clerk, wrote to Michael in 1776, "[a]s your brother could not write by this opportunity this being the Holy Days, he desired me to let you know he is well."⁹⁵

Refraining from work to observe a holiday was relatively easy compared with practices that required some expertise. Jewish law dictates which animals can be consumed, as well as specific rules for slaughtering them. To make observance of the dietary laws easier—even ensure it, perhaps—New York's synagogue employed an individual as shochet and distributed meat to community members.⁹⁶ Until the congregation was more organized, Philadelphia did not have that convenience. No documentary evidence informs us of how Jews in Philadelphia and Lancaster handled kosher slaughter in the 1740s and 1750s, but by the 1760s there were members of the community who arrived with the requisite knowledge or acquired it locally, enabling them to provide for themselves and their families. Benjamin Nathan owned a slaughtering knife, and Israel DeLieben brought with him from London a document certifying that he had been examined and deemed competent to slaughter.⁹⁷ Some, however, lacked experience. In 1764 Isaac Adolphus of New York received a letter from Mordecai Levy, the shochet, asking advice. He referred the question to the person who served as shochet

⁹⁴ William Murray to Barnard Gratz, May 16, 1774, Ohio Company Papers, vol. 1, box 58, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP.

⁹⁵ Charles Matheson to Michael Gratz, Apr. 10, 1776, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP. The Holy Day referred to is Passover, the first two days of which are treated like a Sabbath, when work, including writing, is forbidden.

⁹⁶ "Earliest Extant Minute Books of Shearith Israel," 1–82.

⁹⁷ When Joseph Simon seized Benjamin Nathan's property for failure to pay rent, Simon left him his slaughtering knife. See Stern, "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania," 32. DeLieben certificate signed by Samuel Bar Isaac Keyser, 1774, Samuel Bar Isaac Keyser Kabbalah, P-304, AJHS. Fish, *Barnard and Michael Gratz*, 192–93, describes a controversy within the community regarding the credentials and qualifications of DeLieben. The matter was settled in his favor by Samuel of Halle, a Dutch rabbi who happened to be visiting the area at the time. Another certificate was issued to Solomon Etting of Philadelphia in 1782. See certificate, Mikveh Israel Archives, Congregation Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia, PA. Isaac Rivkind in "Early American Hebrew Documents," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 34 (1937): 51–74, maintains that the certificate was issued by Barnard Gratz. The certificate was written in Hebrew, and the individuals' Hebrew names are used. Archival notes at Mikveh Israel state that Barnet Jacobs issued the certificate.

in their community. Nothing else is known about Levy at that time. It is unclear whether Levy was serving the community or whether he merely slaughtered animals for his own purpose. His training was likely minimal, however, prompting him to seek advice.⁹⁸ Some of these individuals earned money slaughtering animals for other members of the community. In 1768, Levy Andrew Levy told Barnard Gratz that Moses Lazarus, the man then employed by Simon, was leaving. He asked Gratz to find out if “that man who boarded at Moses Mordecai [could] be spared,” or someone else in Philadelphia or New York. His uncle, Levy told Gratz, “will allow him the Sallery of £20 pr [*sic*] year . . . to kill meat for us and to teach the Children.”⁹⁹

Until the early 1770s, individuals took responsibility for kosher slaughtering or employed others to do it for them, yet they still often supported one another’s efforts to observe dietary laws. Reading shopkeeper Myer Josephson sent his friends the Gratzes a quarter of a deer that he had hunted and slaughtered himself. However, adhering to kosher dietary laws proved difficult. With the time it took to procure transportation for the journey to Philadelphia, Josephson feared that the Gratzes might not receive the meat within seventy-two hours. For the meat to be kosher, it had to be washed and salted within that time. He also told them that he had sent the hindquarters, which, to be kosher, had yet to be deveined.¹⁰⁰ In 1774, Joseph Simon sent the Gratzes two kosher turkeys. Shortly after, Philadelphia’s community employed Mordecai Levy—the same man who wrote to Isaac Adolphus for instructions ten years earlier—in some capacity, possibly as a shochet.¹⁰¹

Strict adherence to the dietary laws would have limited Jews’ freedom to consume food outside a Jewish home, but for the merchants and traders who traveled extensively to conduct business, this would have been unfeasible. When they could, they boarded with other Jews, but there were times when this was impossible. Levy Andrew Levy, who spent a

⁹⁸ Isaac Adolphus to Michael Gratz, June 25, 1764, box 1, folder 1, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

⁹⁹ Levy Andrew Levy to Michael Gratz, Feb. 23, 1768, in Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 49; see also Joseph Simon to Barnard Gratz, July 7, 1768, box 1, folder 47, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.

¹⁰⁰ Myer Josephson to Barnard and Michael Gratz, Marcheshvan 11, 5525 [Nov. 6, 1764], box 1, Henry Joseph Collection, AJA. Today, kosher meat is sold prewashed and salted, and the seventy-two hour issues are rarely relevant; unless deveined, the hindquarters are not kosher.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Simon to Michael Gratz, Jan. 5, 1774, Gratz Correspondence 1695–1780, box 67, Frank M. Etting Collection, HSP; Solomon Marache to Barnard Gratz, Mar. 20, 1774, ser. 2, Gratz Family Papers, APS.

few years in Ohio and the Great Lakes region as a trader, no doubt was one who had to improvise. In 1759, James Kenny, a clerk in a trading store in Pittsburgh, noted that while in Winchester he saw "Levy, ye Jew," and that the two of them dined together at a tavern. "[N]either of us would eat Beacon [Bacon]," Kenny wrote.¹⁰² It is unclear why Kenny would not eat bacon, as he was not Jewish, and he never revealed exactly what Levy ate. Whether he refused the meat of a pig, which is entirely prohibited, and ate beef, which would not have been slaughtered according to kosher standards, remains a mystery. Historian Jonathan Sarna posits that many Jews "maintained a double standard—one for home and one for outside."¹⁰³

Circumcision also requires specialized training. There is no record of how the Jews in the area dealt with this until 1757. At that point, Heidelberg shopkeeper Barnet Jacobs became the region's itinerant circumciser. He appears to have been the only reliable person for decades with the requisite skills and instruments required to perform the ritual. Jewish practice requires circumcision to take place on the infant's eighth day, and Jacobs was usually able to adhere to this. Some families, however, lived in too remote a place. Levy Andrew Levy's son was circumcised when he was two years old, probably because he was born when Levy was in Fort Pitt, and the son of a man named Moses was circumcised at almost seven years old. Jacobs's circumcision book also indicates that someone else performed at least one circumcision. Lipman Marks's son Myer was circumcised "for the second time" when he was thirteen weeks old. Jacobs did not indicate who first circumcised the infant, but it must have been improperly executed.¹⁰⁴ Jacobs circumcised only thirty-one boys between 1757 and 1782, in Philadelphia, Lancaster, Reading, Heidelberg, York, and Easton. Dispersed as they were, community members aided and relied upon one another in matters of religious observance.

With the arrival of a few newcomers each year, one hundred to one hundred and fifty Jews resided in the region by 1776, making their religious practice and worship far more viable. During the revolution their numbers increased considerably, when Jews fleeing from the British in New York augmented their numbers. Other Jews came from Charleston, Savannah,

¹⁰² See John W. Jordan, "Journal to Ye Westward," 1758–1759."

¹⁰³ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Stern, "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania." Jacob Raphael Cohen, who lived in Canada for a period and then Pennsylvania, kept a record book of circumcisions, deaths, and marriages from 1781. See also Record Book of Jacob Raphael Cohen, P-118, AJHS.

and Rhode Island.¹⁰⁵ Used to a formal congregation, these transplants applied pressure to articulate “fix’d rules Established by the whole body for its Government.” In fact, the first entry was made in the minute book of Philadelphia’s Congregation Mikveh Israel in 1782. The community raised money to purchase land on Cherry Street and consecrated their newly erected synagogue in September 1782. Under the influence of New Yorkers, they adopted the Sephardic liturgy, in spite of the fact that the colonial community was almost entirely Ashkenazi.¹⁰⁶ The new governing body, dominated by transplants from New York, organized and regulated worship, and it supervised other aspects of observance too. It instituted an official system of review and discipline over episodes that related to religious observance, such as whether Jacob I. Cohen should be permitted to marry the widow of Moses Mordecai, a women who was a Christian, and whether Moses Clava, who had married a non-Jew, could be buried in the Jewish cemetery. One congregant reported another to the board of directors for religious transgressions, such as when Ezekial Levy shaved on the Sabbath, and the board summoned him for an interview.¹⁰⁷

In contrast, the developing community had been without these structures of governance during the late colonial period. Individuals observed to the extent they were inclined or able. While they often cooperated in their efforts and shared information about holidays, the Sabbath, and food, observance seems to have been up to individuals’ consciences. They also collaborated in their economic interactions. They assisted one another with jobs; cooperated in commercial ventures; monitored, cautioned, and chastised one another; and kept those whom they deemed unworthy out-

¹⁰⁵ I have collected the names of approximately one hundred men living in and around Philadelphia from 1736 until 1776. Some of them likely died or moved on, but there were probably others for whom there is no evidence. This number allows for some women and children, although there is minimal information about them. Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 53, number the community at one hundred people at this time; William Pencak also estimates that there were about one hundred Jews in Pennsylvania from the 1760s until the 1790s, except during the American Revolution. See Pencak, “The Jews and Anti-Semitism in Early Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (2002): 366. Ira Rosenwaike estimated that there were 250 Jews in Philadelphia in 1790 based on his analysis of the census. See Rosenwaike, *On The Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati, OH, 1985). Rosenwaike’s figure included a number of Jews who remained in Philadelphia after the revolution.

¹⁰⁶ Minute Book of Congregation Mikveh Israel, box 6, MS-552, AJA; Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, 2:128. Sabato Morais, “Mickve Israel Congregation of Philadelphia,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 1 (1893): 13–24; Wolf and Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 114–18.

¹⁰⁷ Mikveh Israel Congregation to Saul Lowenstamm, Mar. 20, 1785, in Stern, “Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania,” 41–46. Morais, “Mickve Israel Congregation of Philadelphia,” 13–24.

side of their economic circle. Levy Andrew Levy's response to a transgressor perhaps encapsulates the picture best. In 1768, Moses Lazarus, who only recently resigned as Joseph Simon's shochet, was apparently attempting to get started in commerce. He had the task of transporting trade goods from Philadelphia to Lancaster. Lazarus boasted to Myer Josephson that he had stolen some goods from Joseph Simon. "Is such a man worthy to be [called] a Jew [?]," demanded Simon's nephew Levy Andrew Levy. "He should be excommunicated from our society."¹⁰⁸ The episode shows the complexity of this cohort's relationships. The region's Jews were bound by their commonalities, but even as the community itself was rooted in its ethno-religious identity, it was how individuals conducted themselves in business that determined their standing within it.

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¹⁰⁸ Levy Andrew Levy to Michael Gratz, Apr. 4, 1768, box 1, folder 29, Gratz-Franks-Simon Papers, LCP.