Unlike New York, New Orleans, Chicago and Kansas City, cannot claim the emergence of a jazz movement or style, yet it is responsible for a list of fine jazz individualists disproportionate to its population. The story of Kenny Clarke and the lineage of important musicians, especially drummers, launched from Pittsburgh is worthy of scrutinization. Now, with Clarke remembered in Klook, musicologists need to ask, “What is the full story of jazz drumming in Pittsburgh?” Names such as Joe Harris, J. C. Moses, Art Blakey (a certifiable legend of his own), Beaver Harris and Roger Humphries, in addition to Clarke, conjure themes of blue-collar work ethic, accompaniment, driving beat, rhythm. Is the story of the drummer consistent with the character of this region? Singer Jimmy West, in a 1994 interview with Evelyn Hawkins, music director at WDUQ-FM, Pittsburgh’s jazz radio station, said, “We don’t like to admit it, but the steel mills gave us a beat.”

**United States Jewry: The Sephardic Period, 1776-1840**

* (vol. 1)  
by Jacob Rader Marcus  

Rabbi Marcus, originally of the Pittsburgh suburb of Homestead, is the dean of American Jewish historians. He published in 1916 his first article about American Jewry in the *Jewish Community Bulletin* of Wheeling, W. Va. The volume under consideration here is based, in many regards, on his biographical account, *Early American Jewry* (1951 and 1955), and his sociological study, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492-1776* (1970). Although Marcus’ book on the Sephardic period was published five years ago, recent works have not superseded his major conclusions, and the book remains valuable.

The work contains 17 chronologically and topically organized chapters. There are also extensive footnotes and an enormous bibliography which is based on major primary and secondary sources housed in the splendid collections of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.

Marcus examines Jewish involvement in numerous facets of American life. American Jewry between 1776 and 1840 is explained, for the most part, from a consensual viewpoint; Marcus believes that prominent Jews during these years were assimilated and acculturated into American society. There are fine chapters about the roles of Jews during the American Revolution and early Republic, and about Jewish connections to republicanism and merchant capitalism; the leadership of Francis Salvador from 1775 to 1776 in the first two South Carolina provincial congresses; the involvement of Philadelphian Col. Solomon Bush during the 1777 Battle of Brandywine; and the activities of the Philadelphia merchants Barnard and Michael Gratz, who developed a vast commercial empire in Western Pennsylvania by providing food and clothes to Revolutionary armies.

Marcus shows that as a result of their involvement in the American Revolution and of the enactment of the federal constitution, Jews were granted religious liberty and citizenship rights. There also are detailed sections about the place of Jewish businessmen in American society during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Marcus cites Samuel Myers of Norfolk and the Prager brothers of Philadelphia as merchant-shippers, the Gratz brothers and their sons as fur and lumber merchants and as western land speculators, David Lopez, Jr., of Newport as a commission merchant and auctioneer, and Harmon Hendricks of New York as iron-monger.

This study also contains stimulating accounts of the religion and philanthropy of early American Jews. Marcus extensively examines the organization and leadership of synagogues in Philadelphia and other eastern cities; he also discusses the frequent disputes between Sephardic and German Jews over doctrines and practices, and explains the thinking of the Philadelphia Isaac Leeser, the editor of the first American Jewish journal, *The Occident*. Leeser was both a “conforming traditionalist” and a rationalist, believing on the one hand that American Jews should embrace the theology of ancient Judaism, and on the other hand, that they should make some changes in customs and practices. Marcus also assesses the activities of Jewish charitable and educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of Hebrew benevolent societies in New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, and the significance of the creation of the Jewish Sunday school by Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia.

In addition to their involvement in religious institutions, some American Jews became involved with assimilationist and reform movements; Marcus explains that some Jews participated in Freemasonry and that others endorsed in 1824 the efforts of Charlestonians to establish Reform Judaism in America. He also maintains that besides experiencing assimilation, some Jews encountered rejection. Marcus suggests religious, social and economic reasons for anti-Semitism, however, are not as cogent as those offered by a more recent work, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1994), by Leonard Dinnerstein.

Still, scholars are greatly indebted to Marcus for this seminal work, and for his earlier studies. Eli Faber, in *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654-1802* (Baltimore, 1992), cites the works of Marcus. *A History of the Jews in America* (New York, 1992), by Howard M. Sachar, contains valuable chapters about the Germanization of American Jewry and about the Americanization of Germany Jewry. *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York, 1989), by Arthur Hertzberg, stresses the tensions Jews felt in the early American Republic. Both Sachar and Hertzberg acknowledge their respect for the interpretations of Marcus about issues and developments concerning early American Jewry. The authoritative works of Marcus assuredly will serve as a starting point for future studies of Jewry in early America and will not be easily surpassed.

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