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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

The West India and South America Expedition of the American Jewish Archives

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In September, 1654, a shipload of Jewish refugees landed in New Amsterdam on the Hudson. They were religious émigrés fleeing from Brazil. In January of that year the Portuguese had reconquered Brazil, and the Jews could not remain in a country which tolerated no non-Catholics and which threatened heretics with imprisonment and the rigors of an Inquisition.

Most of the Jewish refugees returned to the mother country, to the Netherlands. Quite a number, probably more than we have been wont to assume, did not return to Holland. They followed a pattern characteristic of Jews in periods of expulsion: they settled in the nearest towns and countries which offered them political tolerance and economic opportunity. It was very obvious, therefore, that some of those émigrés would settle in the nearby Guianas. Others went to the English Barbados, to Dutch Curacao, to English Jamaica, and, as we have just seen, to New Amsterdam.

In effect, the flight of those exiles from Brazil created a series of settlements in the New World. There had been individual Jews in all those islands and colonies, but it was not until the arrival of the Brazilians that formal communities were finally constituted. We hope to know more about the beginnings of Jewish life in America as soon as the minute book of Congregation Zur Israel of Recife (1648-1653) is published. Dr. Arnold Wiznitzer will, in the near future, publish this record (*Early Brazilian Judaism*) important for our knowledge of the first Jewish community on this continent. A comparison of the names in that congregation with the names of those who later settled in Surinam, in the West Indies, and in New Amsterdam may throw a great deal of light on the Brazilian diaspora. We may be able, through these names, to trace the flight of the refugees.

The year 1954 will thus mark the three hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the American Jewish community. Jews in this land are becoming increasingly conscious of their historic background; they are interested in their origins. With the destruction of European Jewry, American Jewry has emerged as the largest, if not the most important, Jewry in the world today. Almost one-half of all Jews live in this country. It is only natural, therefore, that they should seek to secure material which will throw light on their early days. It is obvious that it would be wise to backtrack, both geographically and chronologically, over the road from New Amsterdam-New York to Brazil, in order to collect whatever information is available.

As we know, students of American Jewish history have been conscious for a long time that the islands of the Caribbean, the Spanish Main, and Dutch Guiana were important culturally and economically in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They were certainly more significant, in the scheme of the Americas, than the few tidewater frontier settlements on the Atlantic Coast of North America. Certainly, as far as Jewish life was concerned, the Islands and Surinam were more notable than the North American Jewish settlements until the period after the American Revolution.

The student cannot place the past events of early American Jewry in their proper perspective unless he has some understanding of the nature of the religious and economic life of the Jews in the Islands and in South America. It is necessary, therefore, to secure as much information as possible dealing with the Caribbean and South American Jewish communities, certainly up to the year 1800. Whatever data are assembled will be of value not only for Jewish history, but also for the larger American scene.

These were some of the motivations that prompted the American Jewish Archives to conceive of a West India and South America archival expedition. Our primary purpose was to secure copies of all

Jewish manuscript materials up to the year 1800. In actual practice we frequently found it advisable to collect and to copy records up to the year 1900. This change was motivated by the realization that if we did not copy and thus salvage what we found, most of what had survived the ravages of time and the indifference of men would be destroyed in the course of a generation or two. We have thus saved these documents for the students of the future.

It was also our intention, originally, to secure copies of all cemetery inscriptions up to the year 1800. This was speedily found to be impracticable. Proper copying of all old inscriptions would have entailed the employment of a number of laborers to cleanse the cemeteries of their rank vegetation and to uncover stones that are submerged and completely covered with earth. We would have had to devote many weeks if we had resorted to the time-consuming, expensive, but accurate latex mold process of copying. Some of the cemeteries were in distant, almost inaccessible, localities. The old Surinam cemetery of the Joden-Savanne is now entirely covered and surrounded by tropical jungle. The decision not to copy all cemetery inscriptions was fortified by the knowledge that in most communities the death records in the Jewish and general archives are rather complete. In addition, the Rev. Dr. I. S. Emmanuel, now of Rio de Janeiro, former rabbi of the Mikveh Israel congregation in Willemstad, has prepared for publication a corpus of all of the inscriptions in the old Curacao cemetery. It is entitled *The History of the Old Jewish Cemetery of Curacao*. A similar manuscript has been compiled by Eustace Maxwell Shilstone from the stones in the Bridgetown, Barbados, burial ground.

In all the places visited and studied, photographs were taken of various synagogues, of their interior decoration, of old artistic cult utensils, and of selected tombstones.

There were four members of the expedition—all of them volunteers: Rabbi Theodore S. Levy of Huntington, the photostat technician; his wife, Lois Levy; the Rev. Dr. Ferdinand M. Isserman, of Temple Israel, St. Louis; and the director of the American Jewish Archives. The cost of the trip was underwritten by the Lessing Rosenwald Foundation of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. The expenses of Mrs. Levy and Dr. Isserman were not paid by the expedition. The director of the Archives takes this opportunity to thank his co-workers for the sacrificial and untiring devotion which distinguished their labors.

At our very first stop we ran into technical difficulties. It was hoped that all material examined would be copied by the Contoura machine manufactured by the F. G. Ludwig Associates of Woodbridge, Conn. In order to be able to photostat large sheets, a legal-size Contoura was purchased. There is no question that this is a very efficient instrument. It did not, however, completely serve our purpose.

Many of the record books which we examined were large folios, and it required four of the legal-size sheets to photostat a single page of those record books. We found by experience that two persons working vigorously could not photostat and develop more than a hundred pages a day. Most of the government archives close at four o'clock; some of them do not open until ten in the morning. Under such conditions it would have taken us months to copy all the materials we had selected for photoduplication. It must also be borne in mind that the Contoura machine takes a picture in reverse, and even after it has been developed on the spot it has to be retaken later if one desires a standard, orthodox type of image. Thus the final pictures have to undergo two processes of photostating and developing. However, we were fortunate in that we were able to secure commercial photostat service in some towns. In those places, we therefore arranged for the photostating of many of the records which we examined. Were we to undertake a similar expedition in an area where commercial photoduplication services are not readily available, and if we were faced with the problem of copying thousands of pages, we would be inclined to recommend a microfilm camera. The films, of course, could be used on a viewer or processed as photoprints.

We were fortunate with respect to our photographers. In nearly every community we found a competent photographer, but here, too, we ran into trouble. On one occasion we arranged for the taking of a large series of photographs and even stipulated in detail, and in advance, the price to be paid. When the photographs were finally delivered, a few hours before departure time, we were blandly presented with a bill almost twice that which we had agreed upon. Apparently the photographer reasoned that we had no recourse and would pay what he demanded. (We paid it!)

The expedition extended from June 28 to July 27, 1952. All trips were made by airplane. The associates could not remain any longer because all of them had other duties which required their return.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

In Jamaica the Rev. Henry P. Silverman was most helpful. From his collection of personal papers he gave us a copy of an English diary of a voyage made by a Jamaican Jew to New York in 1807. An encounter with a privateer enlivens the story. He also lent us an interesting Hebrew document signed by Rabbi Benjamin Cohen Carillon. It is a formal certificate to the effect that he had dedicated a temporary synagogue in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1845.

Rabbi Silverman's congregation does not possess any minute books prior to the twentieth century. This is unfortunate, for Jamaica is an

old community. It has, however, experienced several earthquakes and a series of disastrous fires. Today the congregation possesses but four old record books. We made copies of their contents up to the year 1840. Three of the books are as follows: *Register Book of Births of The English and German Synagogue, Kingston, Jamaica, 1788-1920*; *Register Book of Marriages of The English and German Synagogue, Kingston, Jamaica, 1788-1920*; *Record of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, K.K.S.A. (Sephardic), Kingston, Jamaica*. This last-named book contains the following subdivisions: Register of Births in the Kaal Kadosh Shahar Ashamaim, Kingston, Jamaica, 1809-1902; Register of Marriages, etc., 1809-1901; Register of Deaths, etc., 1809-1907. The fourth book was a *Sefer Ketubot of K. K. Shahar Ashamaim* from 1883 to 1900. This book was not copied.

An examination of the books in the Institute of Jamaica, the local library in Kingston, disclosed a number of nineteenth-century imprints of Jewish interest. These were items by Rabbis B. C. Carillon, Joseph M. Corcos, and others. The Institute also owns a complete file of the Jewish magazine *First Fruits of the West* (1844). Arrangements were made to borrow these imprints on an interlibrary loan, and to have them copied at the Hebrew Union College Library.

A study of the Spanish manuscripts in the Institute touching on Jamaica (typed transcriptions of originals in Seville) disclosed nothing of value for our purpose.

Sir Noel Livingston, the local historian and antiquarian, graciously lent us his copy of *Eight Chapters in the History of Jamaica* (Kingston, n.d.). This book contains some material of Jewish interest.

SPANISH TOWN, JAMAICA

The Island Record Office and the Registrar General's Department in Spanish Town, Jamaica, contain material of value. The Island Record Office, which serves as a national archives for the Island, was in charge of Mr. C. V. Black. Both he and his associate, Mr. Geoffrey Yates, placed their manuscripts at our disposal.

We examined all the High Court of Vice-Admiralty Papers up to the year 1800, insofar as they were available. There is a brief description of these papers in H. C. Bell and D. W. Parker and others, *Guide to British West Indian Archive Materials, etc.*, pages 373ff. There were a number of interesting references to American Jewish merchant-shippers such as Aaron Lopez and the firm of Isaac Moses, Samuel Myers and Moses Myers. Copies of this material were made.

The Registrar General, Mr. A. W. G. Shaw, placed his records at our disposal. We limited ourself here to an examination of the wills of early Jews. Our terminus was the year 1765 — the limitation was imposed by lack of time for further research — and for the period

from the late 1600's up to 1765 we found about 125 wills which we set aside for copying. In all probability, there are at least 100 or 150 more up to the year 1800 that might well have been copied. Time did not permit us to find them and to examine them. With almost no exception, the Jamaican Jews were of Spanish-Portuguese origin.

WILLEMSTAD, CURACAO

There were no general, secular records in this island of value for us. The Dutch government had already removed all old papers to The Hague. This is true also of the older records in Surinam, in Dutch Guiana.

Mr. Ernest Cohen Henriquez, the well-known notary, made his personal papers available to us. He is related to the Jacob Cohen Henriquez who was in New Amsterdam in 1655. Among the records which Mr. Henriquez lent to us for copying is a photostat of a document touching on the marriage of Jacob Cohen Henriquez. This official instrument was drawn up before he came to New Amsterdam.

There are two Jewish congregations in the city of Willemstad. The one is the Sephardic congregation, Mikveh Israel, established in the middle 1650's. The other is the Liberal Jewish Congregation, Temple Emanu-El, established in 1864. Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo of Mikveh Israel was most helpful, and we are grateful to him for his many courtesies to us.

With a few exceptions, all the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century minutes, records, and correspondence of Mikveh Israel have disappeared. It is not known what happened to them. This is particularly unfortunate. We even checked the attic of the synagogue for a *genizah* (a cache), but there was not a scrap of paper to be found. An old iron treasure chest was laboriously opened, but it also disclosed nothing. Apparently some of the records were extant as late as 1897, for they were, it would seem, used by the Rev. Joseph M. Corcos when he wrote his brochure, *A Synopsis of the History of the Jews of Curacao, etc.* (Curacao, 1897). Fortunately, S. A. L. Maduro, a descendant of one of the early families, possessed an old election entry book going back to the seventeenth century. He lent this to the congregation so that we might copy it.

A very careful search of the papers of the congregation disclosed three interesting eighteenth-century letters. One was a Portuguese business letter sent in 1730 by Moseh de Molina of New York to Congregation Mikveh Israel; the second was a Portuguese letter from Joseph Simson, the president or parnas of Shearith Israel in New York, dated 1748, touching upon the proper certification for export of kosher meat. The final (Spanish) letter, the most interesting of all, was an appeal from the Newport synagogue. Its name at that time was The

Scattered Ones of Israel, *Nephutse Israel*. The letter, written in 1765, was signed by the parnas, Aaron Lopez, and by his associates. It made clear that the congregation had overextended itself financially in building the synagogue, and had been compelled to take out a three-year mortgage. The mortgage was then due, and unless the congregation were given some financial aid by the Curacao community, the Newport Jews feared that they would lose their beautiful building.

We also found an eighteenth-century manuscript dealing with the rules for slaughtering cattle. More important was a manuscript copy of the constitution of a pious association of the same century. These manuscripts were not in very good shape, but they are still legible and should prove of historic interest. There were six *ketubot* ("marriage contract") books extending to the year 1912, but they do not begin before 1781. There is always the possibility that the preceding volumes of marriage records will be uncovered either in The Hague at the Imperial Archives or among the papers of the Amsterdam Sephardic community in Holland. Some time ago the American Jewish Archives succeeded in securing from The Hague certain eighteenth-century Curacao congregational vital statistics. A copy of this material was presented by us to S. A. L. Maduro as a gift to the congregation.

The Mikveh Israel congregational records of the nineteenth century are fairly extensive, although they do not begin until the 1850's. We found about twenty volumes of minute books of the board, the elders (*Ancianos*), and the congregation. These records are relatively complete. There are eight bound volumes of correspondence in Portuguese and Dutch, from 1856 to 1904, and many unbound folders of correspondence beginning with the year 1866.

We made arrangements with Mr. Fischer of Foto Fischer to copy all material up to the year 1900, about 2,000 pages. The congregational boards, headed by S. A. L. Maduro, Otto Senior, and their associates, formally agreed to let us copy all this material. However, the restrictions on its use are very specific. None of this material can be used for historic purposes until all notes are first submitted to the congregational board and the board of elders of Mikveh Israel.

The board of Temple Emanu-El, the first Reform congregation in the West Indies, made all its papers available to us, and these also will be photostated by Mr. Fischer. We are particularly grateful to A. E. Salas, to Charles Gomes Casseres, and to Dr. M. Goudekot, the rabbi of this congregation, for their many courtesies to us.

Temple Emanu-El was well aware of the historic significance of its action when it emerged as a Reform synagogue, and it made a very conscious effort to save every scrap of paper that would throw light on its origin. The result is that in its records we have a minute account of the beginnings of a Reform congregation which has just

seceded from an Orthodox group. The Temple Emanu-El records — in Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and English — consist of about thirty-five bound volumes, in all somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 pages. There are minutes of the board from 1864 to 1923, and congregational minutes for 1866, and for the period 1868 to 1951. The correspondence up to the year 1882 is very voluminous, and is indexed. Among the letters is one from Isaac Mayer Wise recommending a liberal rabbi to the congregation. The financial records extend from 1864 to the present time, and may well serve as an index to the relative wealth of the different members. There are various other documents in the files. Certain restrictions, dealing with the details of the secession, have been laid on the collection. Otherwise the material is unrestricted. In 1864 the congregation issued a reformistic Spanish magazine called *Shemah Israel*. Arrangements were made to have this file — one volume — copied in Cincinnati.

CARACAS, VENEZUELA

While the expedition was at work in Curacao, Dr. Isserman was dispatched to Caracas, Venezuela, on a special mission. It was his assignment to attempt to trace a group of Jews who had gone to that country in the seventeenth century. The source of our information is Corcos, *A Synopsis of the History of the Jews of Curacao*, pages 18-19:

In that same year [1674] another number of Israelites left Curacao for Venezuela.

The majority of these, however, were Italians who, taking advantage of the permission granted to David Cohen Nassi by the West Indian Company in 1659 to establish a Jewish colony in Cayenne, emigrated from Leghorn to that country; but after the war with Portugal, and again with France which took possession of Cayenne in 1664, the Jews finding themselves uncomfortable quitted the country and came to Curacao, from where they went to Tucacas, Venezuela, where they established and formed themselves into a congregation.

On the 2nd of September, 1720, the congregation of Tucacas known as "Santa Irmandade" directed a letter signed by Samuel R'ss Gradis, Gabbay of the community, to the "Mikveh Israel" congregation of Curacao with an enclosure of three hundred and forty dollars, soliciting its acceptance as a present from them for the purpose of purchasing a "Sepher Torah" (scroll of the revealed Law) with its adornments for the use of the Synagogue in Curacao.

Dr. Isserman consulted the most eminent historians in Venezuela, and worked at the National Archives, but, unfortunately, found no trace of this early Jewish group. In all likelihood, they were Marranos

who maintained their corporate fellowship under the guise of a philanthropic Catholic Holy Brotherhood. They would not have been so foolhardy as to leave any record of themselves as Jews. It may be that they were suspected and even caught. If so, the grim record may still be found in the files of the Inquisition in Spain or in some other depository. Inquiry did reveal that there were "Jews," apparently Marranos, buried in the cemeteries at Puerto Cabello and Coro. We did not check the burial grounds in those distant towns. Inasmuch as the Spanish names borne by the Marranos are common to many Gentile Spaniards, we did not see how we could determine the Jewish origin of the men we sought.

The other members of the expedition joined Dr. Isserman later at the National Archives. Further study there revealed nothing beyond a manuscript order (1810) which prohibited the entrance of Jews into the country.

The local Sephardic congregation dates only from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and could offer us no information or material. It did have some contemporary Jewish imprints, which we secured for the Hebrew Union College Library.

PARAMARIBO, SURINAM

There are at the present time two separate Jewish congregations in Paramaribo, a Sephardic and an Ashkenazic one. However, the Ashkenazic synagogue uses the Sephardic ritual. Apparently, the division between the two groups is "ethnic" rather than religious. But even this statement should not be taken too literally, inasmuch as many of the members of the Ashkenazic congregation have Sephardic forebears. One rabbi, the Rev. Mr. N. Groen, serves both congregations. Mr. Groen was most sympathetic and helpful.

The records of the Sephardic group were all gone, with the exception of one or two minute books dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. We were not able to secure permission to make copies. The retired Sephardic hazzan, the Rev. I. J. Bueno Mesquita, graciously lent us some of his manuscript ritual books and some nineteenth-century imprints.

The Ashkenazic records, which go back to the establishment of the Ashkenazic synagogue about the year 1734, were relatively complete. That they have been preserved at all is due to the efforts of a very remarkable person, Mr. Philip A. Samson. The latter is the soul of the Paramaribo Jewish community. He is one of the most prominent citizens of the community, a lawyer, a civil servant, and a former deputy member of the Supreme Court. At the present time he is the editor of the Jewish newspaper, *Teroenga* (*Teruah*, "The Call"), which he issues and keeps alive for the sake of the few hun-



SYNAGOGUE LANE, BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

dred Jews who live in the country. Mr. Samson is a devoted Jew, well-versed in the ritual and in the Bible, in the original, and fully conscious of the importance of and the need for preserving all local Jewish historical records. For many years he has labored to uncover material, to arrange it systematically, and to see that it is properly preserved. Had it not been for him, it is safe to say that practically nothing would have been saved, and that Surinam Jewry would have "lost" its history. Apparently, the Sephardic papers were lost or destroyed before his time.

The Ashkenazic synagogal records, in Portuguese and Dutch, include minute books, correspondence, fiscal records, and the papers of various pious associations. All told, there are about five thousand pages of material. The president, Mr. Geleered, Mr. Samson, and their associates, realizing the need of preserving their files for future historians, gave us the originals with the understanding that we were to photostat them here in Cincinnati and to provide copies for use in Surinam. However, only about thirty hours before our departure, it was recalled that a law had been passed by the national legislature of Surinam, in February, 1952, prohibiting the exportation of all historic materials until they had first been examined by a national commission. The national commission, unfortunately for us, had not yet been appointed. In this crisis we girded up our loins and went to work. We asked that our request that this material be lent to us be presented at a cabinet meeting to take place the following morning. The distinguished leader in Surinam national affairs, Mr. Emile de la Fuente, a member of the Jewish community, was most interested in our efforts and graciously interceded for us with the authorities. The governor, Dr. J. Klaazenz, and the cabinet, as we later found out, were also sympathetic to our request. They wanted to help us. Knowing that haste was required, they appointed the commission at the very same cabinet meeting. The commission met that afternoon at four and discussed the matter of the records with us. At 5:30 they kindly granted us permission to borrow the originals for purposes of copying, and by six o'clock the material was packed for shipment by air cargo to Cincinnati. When arranged and properly catalogued, these papers should prove of great value to students of American Jewish history.

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

While on the way to Barbados, we stopped in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and examined some of the documents in the Registrar General's department in the Red House. In spite of the fact that there was no Jewish congregation in the island in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we thought we might find some materials of interest. A few

of the wills and the conveyance books from the island of Tobago, now on deposit in Trinidad, were examined, but they did not disclose anything of value.

There had originally been an old Sephardic congregation in Bridgetown, Barbados. It was one of the oldest in the western world, and was established probably in the 1650's. It was called *Nidhe Israel*, The Dispersed Ones of Israel. It is very interesting to note that the American Jews were conscious of the fact that they were a "frontier" group. They dramatized themselves in the names they chose to describe their congregations. The New York congregation called itself *The Remnant of Israel*. The Newport Jews, in the middle-eighteenth century, called themselves *The Scattered Ones of Israel*, and, as we have just seen, the Barbados Jews called themselves *The Dispersed Ones of Israel*. The Curacao Jews only were exceptional in that they cheerfully called themselves *The Hope of Israel*.

Congregation *Nidhe Israel* died out in the early decades of this century. The last Jewish member and the Sephardic trustees in London sold the synagogue, graveyard, and other Jewish properties. They fell into Christian hands. Through an unfortunate series of events the cemetery was almost destroyed. That it is still in existence today and is being preserved is due in no small part to the efforts of Eustace Maxwell Shilstone and some of his friends.

Mr. Shilstone is one of the outstanding attorneys in Barbados and a very distinguished Anglican layman. As a young man he had frequently visited the synagogue and was struck by its beauty. When he first began to practice law, his offices overlooked the cemetery and the synagogue courtyard. The Barbados cemetery is one of the few Jewish burial grounds attached to a synagogue. Mr. Shilstone made every effort, originally, to save the synagogue, and even offered to buy it himself, but he failed to secure it. At the present time it is a turf club where bets on the races are recorded. The beautiful chandeliers now grace the home of an American millionaire. (They brought more than the sale price of the entire synagogue.) Mr. Shilstone and his associates did succeed, however, in preserving the cemetery from complete desecration and destruction. Control of it is now vested in trustees, Christians and representatives of a congregation of Jewish newcomers from Central and Eastern Europe. Much damage has already been done, many of the stones have already been broken, and others have become submerged and are covered by earth. Fortunately, Mr. Shilstone copied most of the inscriptions several years ago and thus preserved their historical data for us. It would be a fine project for some brotherhood or sisterhood in this country to "adopt" this cemetery and to keep it in good order. It could very easily become one of the historic showplaces of the West Indies. Some of the stones



OLD SEPHARDIC CEMETERY, CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS

go back to the year 1660. In all probability, this is the oldest Jewish cemetery in the western world.

Among the stones of interest which we found there was that of Samuel Hart, the son of Moses Hart. Samuel Hart came from New York, where he had been president of the congregation as late as 1768. He was probably related to the Newport Harts. He died in Barbados on October 15, 1773, of the "putrid fever."

We also found the stone of Raphael Haim Isaac Carigal. He is the well-known Hebron rabbi who came to Newport in 1773 and stayed for some time in that city. Carigal spoke to the congregation on Pentecost of that year, preaching in Spanish. That sermon was immediately translated into English and published, thus becoming the first sermon which was preached in this country and was published in an English translation. Carigal, as we know, became rabbi in Bridgetown, and died there in 1777 at the age of forty-eight. Dr. Isserman's congregation in St. Louis recently subscribed the money necessary to repair the Carigal tombstone. It had been shattered, and was beginning to crumble.

Another stone of considerable interest in this cemetery is that of Mosseh Haym Nahamyas, who died in 1672. There is no question in my mind that he is to be identified with the Moses Nehemiah who was carrying on litigation in York County, Virginia, in 1658. Moses Nehemiah is the first known Jew to have lived in Virginia.

Mr. Shilstone, who is also the outstanding historian of the island and one of the founders of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, has collected a large body of source material dealing with the early history of Barbados. He has graciously given us duplicates of some of the Jewish records which he possesses, and he has lent us several of his note-books. These books contain biographical data on some of the old Barbados Jewish families, miscellaneous notes on the officers of the old congregation, and statistics dealing with the languages employed on the tombstones. Mr. Shilstone has also collected the names of all those listed in the governmental burial register, but who have not been identified with those found on the tombstone inscriptions. His list of tombstone inscriptions includes 377 names.

The expedition spent considerable time checking many of the records in the Registrar's Office in the Public Buildings. The deeds, powers of attorney, and the wills were checked through the year 1800. One of the deeds, an indenture, contained a plan which showed the location of a synagogue — rented or owned — as early as 1661. Among the powers of attorney, many of which went back to the seventeenth century, was one issued by Mordecai Gomez of New York for his brother Jacob. It was dated 1718. The hazards of hurricanes, earthquakes, and pirates, which one then faced in the West Indies in the



SEPHARDIC SYNAGOGUE, CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS

pursuit of business, are stressed by the fact that four years later Jacob Gomez was "cut to pieces" by pirates off the Cuban Coast. The details of his sad end are recorded by Lee M. Friedman in Volume XXXVIII of the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. Gomez' brothers, treasuring his memory, built a schooner three years later in New York City (1725) and named it the "Jacob" (Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, Washington, 1932, III, 481).

The wills which were examined proved to be very valuable. Over one hundred of them, covering the period from the late seventeenth century to the year 1800, were set aside for copying. The expedition wishes to express its thanks to the Registrar, Mr. Williams, and to the chief clerk, Mr. C. S. Daniels, for their constant courtesies to us.

The Registrar's Office possesses a manuscript copy of a census of all the white inhabitants of the Island for the year 1715. All Jewish material was carefully abstracted and copied.

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS

After the expedition left Paramaribo, it was divided into two parts. While the director and Dr. Isserman worked in Barbados, Rabbi and Mrs. Levy went on ahead to St. Thomas. There they met Rabbi M. D. Sasso, Governor Morris F. deCastro, and other members of the congregation. All of them were most hospitable to Rabbi and Mrs. Levy and to the other members of the expedition when they arrived on the island later. The Rev. Mr. Sasso has charge of the archives of Congregation Berakah We-Shalom U-Gemilut Hasadim. He and the board were gracious enough to permit the immediate copying of the following records: *Records of Births, 1786ff.* This record includes a reference to the birth of Judah P. Benjamin in St. Croix in 1811. Other books copied were *Record of Marriages*, nineteenth century; *Record of Deaths, 1792ff.*; *Record of Confirmations*, nineteenth century. There is a contemporary record of *Births, Marriages and Deaths* which goes back to the year 1857. This book was also copied. All names in the above books are now being carefully indexed on individual cards by Miss Enid M. Baa of the Public Library in Charlotte Amalie. Through the courtesy of Mr. Francisco de Sola of San Salvador, of Mr. E. Alvin Fidanque of New York, and of the Charlotte Amalie Public Library, permission has been granted to us to secure a copy of this index.

There were no secular or general records of value to us on the island. All old records, including wills, had been sent to the Royal Archives at Copenhagen in Denmark or to the National Archives in Washington. The material in Washington will be studied with a view to copying Jewish documents for historical purposes.

Among the pictures taken were two photographs of portraits of the grandparents of Mrs. Sasso. Her grandparents were the Rev. David Cardoze (1824-1914) and his wife Rachel Adeliza. The portraits are unsigned, but, according to a family tradition, they were painted by Camille Pissarro of St. Thomas, who was later to become one of the distinguished founders of French Impressionism.

Mr. E. Alvin Fidanque of New York City has always evidenced an interest in our work, and we wish to express our thanks to him.

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We believe that we found and examined practically all the literary materials in the Islands, the Spanish Main, and Surinam which throw light on Jewish history. We have either copied this material or have made arrangements to have copies made and forwarded to us. Numerous photographs of synagogal buildings, cemeteries, cult utensils, and the like have already been made or ordered. Copying these records—several thousand pages—will not only make them available to students of Jewish and general history, but will save most of them from the destruction to which they seem destined in their present depositories. Tropical and sub-tropical climates are very hard on paper documents.

In order to complement and to complete the work which has already been done, it will be necessary to make an archival trip to Europe. We know now that there are in European archives literally thousands of pages of documents which will throw light directly on the American Jewish communities. These materials are to be found in the national archives of Holland, Denmark, France, England, and Spain. There is much also, we believe, in the municipal archives of Amsterdam, and, probably, in the archives of other European metropolises. Certainly, valuable records will be found in the congregational archives of the Spanish Jewish community of Amsterdam and, very probably, in the records of Bevis Marks. We sincerely hope that some generous and farsighted philanthropist will provide us with the means to make this trip.

The American Jewish Archives wishes to repeat what it has often said: All its records—except those which are restricted by the donors—will always be available, not only for study, but also for photoduplication. Detailed descriptions of all manuscripts acquired on this West India expedition will, in the course of time, appear in the lists of acquisitions of the *American Jewish Archives*. We conceive that our collections are so much waste paper if they cannot be copied and used by others.