

Lee M. Friedman

1871-1957

In Memoriam

When Lee M. Friedman died in Boston on August 7th, a generation came to an end. Back in the 1890's, a group of wealthy cultured Jews, many of them of the older stock, founded the American Jewish Historical Society. These men, not untouched by a pardonable pride, had as their intention to emphasize the contribution that the Jew had made to the discovery of America and to signalize the achievement of those Jewish pioneers who had helped bring this country to birth. Lee M. Friedman was part of that group, but as the century advanced and his understanding of historic values grew apace, he looked askance at filiopietism and recognized the claims of a more critical methodology. Though his work as a successful and very busy practitioner of law made it difficult for him to carry on detailed research, within the limitations of the time at his disposal and of his scientific training he succeeded in writing a series of works which will long be useful to the professional historian.

This man grew with the times. He was interested in people, in ideas, in a striking incident that could enlighten a whole epoch. The German newcomer who fled from Hitler, the East European who built an industry in a Vermont village, the Christian missionary who sought to settle Jews on the soil, the beginnings of the clothing industry — all these and a host of others were the themes that poured from his pen to help build the new science of American Jewish historiography. Sensing, after the destruction of European Jewry in World War II, that here in America a new and promising Jewish life was about to burgeon, he devoted himself intensively to the writing of American Jewish history. If he wrote on *Pioneers and Patriots*, and as a Jew put his best foot forward, he wrote also on

Pilgrims in a New Land, stressing the attempt of the Jew to adjust to the New World in which he found himself.

It is no exaggeration to say that he had an impassioned love for American Jewish history. His eyes brightened as he spoke of his books and as he displayed his manuscripts, and his whole being glowed as he puffed away at his pipe and talked of his latest find or sketched his next essay. As one who integrated devotion to the history of his people with a love and respect for American life and folkways, Lee Friedman may well serve as a pattern to those many brilliant Jewish professional men who seek new cultural horizons.

Because of his charm, his courtesy, his generosity, and his whole-souled attachment to his studies, we shall always hold him in our thoughts and salute his memory.

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