

Asser Levy—A Postscript

To the Editors
American Jewish Archives

Dear Sirs:

Your readers may be interested in the following items evoked by my article "Asser Levy—A New Look at Our Jewish Founding Father" (*AJA*, vol. XXVI, No. 1, April 1974, pp. 66-77):

Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Brillung, German historian, has informed me that Valentine van der Wilden and his son Simon Valentine van der Wilden came from Vilna, Lithuania, a community referred to in seventeenth-century Dutch records as "der Wilden." Thus there were Litvaks in America in 1680.

Asser Levy's death date in the administration of his affairs is recorded as February 1, 1681/2. (The dual dating refers to January and February of the following year.) In 1681/2—i.e., within a month of Asser Levy's death—Joseph Bueno de Mesquita purchased a plot of ground "for a Jew Burying Place," which became the present Chatham Square Cemetery. (See David de Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone* [N.Y., 1952], pp. 10 f.)

Since Stuyvesant had granted "a little hook of land" to the Jews as a burying place in February, 1656 (*ibid.*, p. 8), and since, as our article and other sources indicate, there were few Jews in New York—indeed, Levy may have been the only one between 1660 and 1680—why the need for a new cemetery? I believe that the answer is to be found in the fact that Levy had attracted a growing group of his Ashkenazic relatives. As is well known from other colonial sources, the Ashkenazim and Sephardim were ritually far apart. It is our belief that Joseph Bueno, a Sephardi, purchased his plot in order to be separated from Asser Levy and his kin.

Respectfully submitted,
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