
“Give Me My Childhood Again”: The Grand Street Boys’ Association

1915–1945

Jeffrey A. Marx

Backward, flow backward O tide of the years! I am so weary of toil and of tears—Toil without recompense, tears all in vain! Take them, and give me my childhood again!

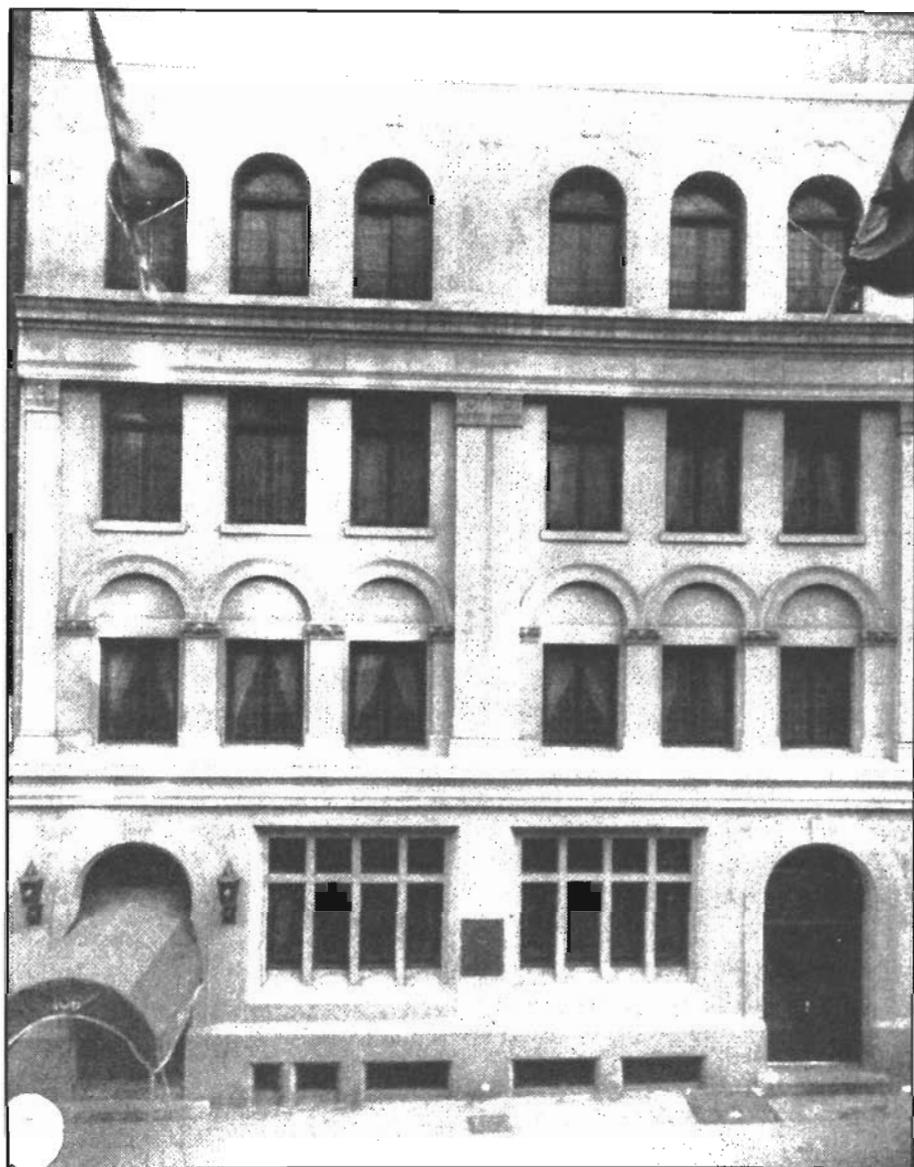
—*Elizabeth Akers Allen,*
Rock Me to Sleep

In the 1920s, second-generation East European Jews emerged into the social, political, economic, and religious spheres of American life. Influenced by the experience of their immigrant parents on the one hand and by their own Americanization on the other, this generation of Jews created new communal structures and patterns of identification within the American Jewish community. No organization more clearly reflects the demographic, political, economic, and religious changes that occurred in the lives of New York (and American) Jewry between the 1920s and 1940s than the Grand Street Boys’ Association.

Formation

The beginning of the Grand Street Boys’ Association (GSBA) occurred in 1915, when a businessman, Morris S. Marks, set about organizing a dinner-reunion for men who had grown up on the Lower East Side. The reunion took place at Terrace Garden on January 18, 1916. There are no records of the dinner, but in all probability, the attendance was under 100 and consisted primarily of Jewish judges, lawyers, and businessmen.

In 1919, Marks arranged for a second dinner-reunion, which was held in the Hotel Astor on February 1, 1920. Among those attending were Judge Max Levine, Judge Otto Rosalsky, and Jimmy Walker, later to be mayor of New York. At this second dinner, it was decided to



*The Grand Street Boys' Association Clubhouse at 106-108
West 55th Street*

(Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society)

form a permanent organization of former Lower East Side residents, and, accordingly, a nominating committee was set up.¹

The first meeting of the organization was held two months later, in late March, at the Hotel Pennsylvania. Approximately 100 men attended, and Max S. Levine, judge of the New York Court of General Sessions, was elected president. On April 9, 1920, the GSBA was incorporated as an organization. Shortly thereafter, an office was opened at 1482 Broadway.

The purpose of the GSBA was, as stated in its original charter, "to reunite youthful friends and renew the early friendships of our Grand St. days; to promote our mutual welfare; to relieve distress; to maintain a clubhouse and to encourage the education and moral advancement of our members and the youth of our Grand St. neighborhood."² Reflecting their Lower East Side childhood, the group adopted as its emblem a picture of three barefoot boys holding a small cake. Surrounding the boys were the words "Good Fellowship, Benevolence, Charity." Under the boys was a four-line poem, which concluded: "Give me my childhood again!"³

One year later, the GSBA numbered almost 1,000 members, a figure which more than doubled by early 1922. Due to its growing membership, the association moved its bimonthly meetings from a small room at the Hotel Pennsylvania to the Grand Ball Room. It was clear that the GSBA needed a place of its own. Talk of a clubhouse began in 1921, and in the early months of 1923, the officers put forth a plan for the acquisition of a permanent clubhouse. The members decided to buy and remodel the old MacDougal Club, located in midtown Manhattan, for an approximate cost of \$150,000. Since the dues were only \$10 a year, the association raised the money by selling the members certificates of indebtedness, ranging from \$25 to \$250. The money was raised in one year's time, testifying to the general prosperity of the membership.

In 1924, the clubhouse at 106-108 West 55th Street was opened and dedicated. Its several stories contained a barbershop, a gym with steambox and two masseurs, a library, a social room with cards, checkers, and chess, an auditorium, a grill, an office for the president, and a boardroom. By the year's end, no doubt helped by having a permanent facility, the GSBA had nearly 5,000 members.⁴

From its inception, the GSBA had a primarily Jewish membership. The membership list for 1921 contains nearly all Jewish names. Of the officers and board of directors in 1922, only two were non-Jews: Judge Joseph Mulqueen and Congressman Christopher D. Sullivan. Though officially nonsectarian, the GSBA was, in actuality, a largely Jewish group.⁵

At the annual dinner-dance in January 1922, the members were identified as immigrants or children of immigrants. Their lowly origins were also noted: "It seems but a short while ago that they had been struggling together in poverty and squalor; living in dingy tenements . . . and on a hot summer's night sought relief on the tenement roof." What was striking about the members, however, was how far they had come: ". . . the boys who sold newspapers and peddled matches became prominent lawyers and jurists. . . . Each one, whatever his calling may be, is a successful self-made man." The members were cited for their philanthropic activities in helping to build Beth Israel Hospital, supporting HIAS, the Free Loan Association, and religious schools.⁶ While many still had their businesses on the Lower East Side, others were now located in Flatbush, along the Grand Concourse, on the West 50's, and in Harlem.⁷

The speeches and articles in the GSBA's 1922 yearbook reflect the facility with English attained by many of its members. Their words were often lofty, poetic, and certainly indistinguishable from a those of a "Yankee." Not only their vocabulary but the *content* of their speeches made it clear how far they had come from their immigrant origins on the Lower East Side. It was as though, in 1922, the Lower East Side was already a part of the distant past. The neighborhood is referred to as a "bygone homeland." "The olden days, the good old-fashioned ways have long ago passed," stated the yearbook. The dinner-dance's greeting proclaimed: "The sole purpose of our association is to preserve the ideals of a past in whose memories we delight to revel, living them over again in the vale of maturer years."⁸

The membership of the GSBA also expressed a grand nostalgia for the Lower East Side. Its "smiles, tears and sympathetic heart" are referred to in the yearbook, as are the neighborhood's "humble and blessed homes, so warm in our affections."⁹ The speakers at the din-

ner, moreover, repeatedly connected material well-being and Americanism in their remarks. The members, one said, were "exemplifying American opportunity. . . . All are imbued with the true spirit of Americanism, unexcelled in their patriotism and devotion to their adopted country."¹⁰

Nostalgia for the Old Neighborhood

At its 1922 dinner-dance, the GSBA displayed several key characteristics of East European Jewry in America in the opening decades of the twentieth century. First was the fact that a second generation had now arisen, the offspring of parents who arrived in America between 1880 and 1900. The European immigrants who came to America in the 1920s were now encountering a fully grown, second-generation population.

Second, by 1920, many Jews had already left the Lower East Side. As mentioned above, they settled in Upper Manhattan and in the surrounding boroughs. That is why the clubhouse was not built on the Lower East Side but in mid-Manhattan, which would be a central location for its members. It was this second generation that would provide the basis for the drama of Jewish mobility, for the rags-to-riches stories of the East European immigrants. In truth, many were quite successful as merchants, and having "made it," they quite naturally sought to distance themselves from their old roots, if only in a figurative sense, seeing the Lower East Side as a neighborhood from the ancient past. Yet, the Lower East Side remained a highly visible immigrant community during the 1920s and 1930s, boasting a Jewish population of 100,000. Of the area's 12,000 shops, 75 percent were still Jewish-owned.¹¹

Though these successful Jews wished to distance themselves from their lowly beginnings, they did not want to forget them entirely. For second-generation Jews, the Lower East Side provided an emotional point of reference. Their parents could look back to the Old Country, but for them the culture of Eastern Europe was, at best, an abstract ideal. Their point of reference was the "old neighborhood," which summoned up memories of childhood, and soon entered into myth as the organic community, a place of warm, rich culture. Deborah Dash Moore, in her work on second-generation New York Jews, stated that

for many of them the neighborhood meant “friendships, spatial patterns, and vaguely articulated communal values.”¹² It was for this reason that the members of the GSBA waxed nostalgic for “the good old days.”

Ethnicity

The preceding discussion shows that the GSBA, in 1922, spotlighted the beginning of the second generation’s transition into an American ethnic group. While the German immigrant experience helped shape the voluntary aspects of the American Jewish community, it was this second generation of East European Jews that further defined the community as public in nature. They developed the notion that secular structures, such as civic or social clubs, could be used as a means of identification. These second-generation East European Jews were able to synthesize their immigrant parents’ communal structures with existing American institutions, to create a new form of Jewish community.

For the European immigrants, the *chevra* and *landsmanshaft* fulfilled some of their religious and social needs. These organizations were based on kinship and shtetl of origin, and functioned “to unify all members to live in a spirit of brotherhood, to support a member fallen on bad days, and to bury members according to Jewish law.”¹³ Though the GSBA’s members had no common shtetl, they did have an old neighborhood in common. Though they could not pray at the GSBA, it would be there, as its charter stated, to relieve their distress and serve as a mutual welfare organization. Thus, in the GSBA we see how the religious and communal societies of the first generation were transformed into the social clubs of the second, clubs which did not need to be restricted entirely to Jews.

Social and Political Factors

The fifth anniversary yearbook of the GSBA (1925), while highlighting several new activities of the association, also reflects the social and political conditions of the mid-1920s. It contains articles by a Jew, an Irishman, and an Italian in defense of the idealism and patriotism of the Lower East Side community, and it reports that in 1924 a relief

fund was established to fund Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish institutions, as well as a ladies' auxiliary engaged in charitable activities. The yearbook proclaims: "Our main objective is to relieve humanity in distress and not question the belief of the beneficiary, taking it for granted that we are all God's children." The association here displayed the characteristics which it would bear for the next half-century: assertions of the worthiness of the immigrants, proclamations of loyalty to America, and the desire for a society that would not discriminate or show favoritism toward religion or race.¹⁴

There are several reasons why the GSBA may have chosen to articulate these particular values. In the early 1920s, America witnessed an anti-immigration backlash, which culminated in the Immigration Act of 1924. Throughout the decade, the radicalism of Lower East Side Jews was cited by opponents of immigration as evidence that Jews were inherently un-American and would never become good citizens.¹⁵ The twenties also saw the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, as well as Henry Ford's publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In addition, 1919 was the beginning of the Red Scare in America. "Patriotic associations drew up lists of citizens suspected of disloyalty. . . . Aliens suspected of disloyalty were rounded up and deported."¹⁶ It is against this background that the desire of the GSBA's members to defend their immigrant heritage and assert their strong patriotic beliefs can be understood.

Though these second-generation Jews sought to protect themselves against any form of social discrimination, the GSBA's support for social equality must be seen against the larger issue of Jewish involvement with liberalism and social reform in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. In part because they had been exposed to traditional Jewish values concerning social justice and to the millenarian dreams of the Jewish socialist movement on the Lower East Side, its members were attached to the idea of social reform. Moreover, coming from urban neighborhoods, they appreciated the benefits wrought by early social reformers, such as street and sewer upgrading, ventilated apartments, and city parks.

In the 1920s reformers and social workers began to shift their operating philosophy; instead of seeking to ameliorate the ills which society produced, they now sought to prevent them. They sought to create a fundamentally just society, involving a freer, fuller, and more secure

life for all. The new goal of social work was “releasing the best energies of individuals, by giving them an assurance of security and opportunity.”¹⁷ The role of the community, according to this model, was to open up new avenues of opportunity for every individual. The GSBA wholeheartedly embraced this new community role, especially since the goals of social reform seemed to mark the very essence of America.

It should be noted, however, that the second-generation Jews were liberal but not radical. Their relatively rapid economic and social rise caused them to link their group efforts with America’s urban middle class. Their moral values were middle-class moral values.¹⁸ Fulfillment, as defined by the GSBA and other second-generation Jews, became the American success story. Social justice would be achieved *not* when the workers had a larger say in management, but when there was no racial or religious discrimination in their hiring.

By 1928, just before the Depression, the GSBA numbered more than 6,500 members. It still maintained its fraternalistic goals. Though it was officially nonsectarian and boasted some Irish and Italian names on its membership list and officers’ roll, the association still was overwhelmingly Jewish. Nonetheless, it made every effort to be fair to all religious and ethnic groups.¹⁹

Auxiliaries

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, several GSBA auxiliaries were formed, some of which were to remain for over half a century. The first of these came about when some members of the GSBA who had served in the armed forces in World War I decided to give a once-a-year dinner for wounded veterans still in government hospitals. This apparently brought to light a common link between some of the members, and the idea of starting an American Legion chapter was born. Post 102 was organized sometime between 1928 and 1930; it started with approximately 65 members. Aside from participating in national Legion functions, the chapter supported and trained a youth drum-and-bugle corps and sponsored essay contests on the subject of liberty.²⁰

In 1933–34, the Yeomen came into existence. This group consisted of GSBA members between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who met several times a year for day outings and evening activities. From the

beginning, however, membership was a problem for the Yeomen. In 1937, for example, they numbered 150 out of the total GSBA membership of 4,000. This was because as the years went on, fewer and fewer young men could be found who had grown up on the Lower East Side or who had the nostalgic view toward the neighborhood held by many older members. The onset of World War II put a halt to the Yeomen's activities since the majority of them were drafted. The group was reconstituted after the war, though its membership continued to decrease.²¹

Another auxiliary was the Amen Boys, which began around 1934. Although the Amen Boys had fewer activities than the Yeomen, they never had any membership difficulties. In part, this was because this auxiliary was for GSBA members over the age of fifty. Many of the Amen Boys were true "Grand Streeters," having actually grown up on the Lower East Side, and thus felt more of an affinity with the association's premises.²²

Jonah Goldstein

In 1935, Judge Jonah Goldstein became the third president of the GSBA.²³ He held this office for the next three decades, until his death in 1967, and more than any other member came to personify the organization. As one old-timer put it: "It was not Goldstein who reflected the members' views, but rather, the membership who reflected Goldstein's views."²⁴

Born in Ontario in 1886, Goldstein moved to the Lower East Side with his parents and seven siblings in 1892. After graduating from New York University's law school, he served as secretary to Al Smith, then majority leader of the State Assembly. Later he opened his own law practice and became a resident worker at the University Settlement. In 1936 he became judge of General Sessions in New York, and in 1945 he ran unsuccessfully for mayor on the Fusion ticket. After retiring from the bench in 1956, he spent the next decade serving actively as president of the GSBA.²⁵

Goldstein was not only a Lower East Side boy who made good, but one who was involved in Lower East Side Jewish communal politics from an early age. In 1912, Goldstein had volunteered to head a district office for the New York Kehillah, to help gather information

about crime on the Lower East Side. Conflicts soon developed, however, between him and Judah Magnes, who headed the Kehillah. Several months later, Goldstein resigned and helped form the East Side Neighborhood Association. This group sponsored weekly discussions of civic problems in its attempt to help fight crime. In his letter of resignation, Goldstein wrote that the early participation of East Siders in the Kehillah's crime-fighting activities now had ended in "suspicion of everyone and everything that smacked of the Lower East Side."²⁶ In 1913, based on information supplied to him by the chief investigator of the Kehillah's Bureau of Social Morals, Magnes commented that Goldstein was not trustworthy. Goldstein promptly instituted a libel suit, which was settled in 1916 when Magnes apologized.²⁷

Clearly Goldstein, in those years, resented the snobbishness of up-town Jews like Magnes and was intent on proving that East Siders could manage their own affairs. These early events may help explain the tremendous energy he poured into the GSBA over several decades, making its name and his renowned and respected in New York.²⁸

Civic Activities

Under Goldstein's leadership, the activities of the GSBA began to grow and the association reached out to embrace all of New York City. A monthly bulletin, *Wuxtra* (named from the cry of the paper boys), was started in 1936. That same year, the association began the custom of holding an annual party for couples who had been married for at least fifty years but had not had a golden wedding celebration. Over the years, Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Chinese, and Blacks were feted.²⁹

In 1936, the GSBA began its involvement with sports activities by sponsoring a track team. The team was started because other athletic clubs in New York were discriminating against athletes based on their color or religion. In 1938 an ice skating team and a handball team were begun. A cross-country team was introduced in 1941, and in 1947, a basketball team. True to form, all the teams were made up of players of different religions and races. Over the years, the teams amassed an impressive record of wins.³⁰

Under Goldstein's leadership, the GSBA loudly touted itself as an embodiment of American idealism and civic pride. In 1937, it adopted a slogan coined by Jimmy Walker, "Headquarters of those who really

love New York." No longer was growing up on the Lower East Side a prerequisite for membership. Now, a willingness to accept the association's aims was deemed qualification enough.³¹

As a result of this new civic emphasis, the focus of the GSBA shifted away from "the good old days on the Lower East Side." Instead, the Lower East Side now came to stand for the entire immigrant experience. By the early forties, the association was making an annual pilgrimage to Columbus's statue on October 12 to lay a wreath.³²

During these years, the GSBA touted itself as an organization for all. The clubhouse was opened up for use by civic groups of many types, among them a religiously and racially mixed Boy Scout troop sponsored by the association, Big Brothers, the Negro Actors' Guild, and the Merry-Go-Rounders, a group of deaf dancers who danced in perfect rhythm, using the vibrations of the floor as a guide. In addition, the GSBA sponsored high school essay contests on such themes as "Why I Love New York."³³

Welfare Activities

Though the GSBA had been involved in welfare activities since its inception, the 1940s saw the beginning of large-scale projects. During World War II, \$5,000 was raised and sent to Sir Louis Sterling, a former Lower East Side resident, who had emigrated to England and made his fortune selling phonographs and records. The money was used to help build Grand Street House, a shelter in Surrey, to care for the homeless of London's East End.³⁴

Following the war, the GSBA began giving maintenance scholarships to New York City students from welfare families who were attending municipal and private colleges or studying nursing. The beneficiaries were not only given money but were befriended by members of the association, who invited them home for dinner and served as their advisors. In addition, the association gave maintenance scholarships to needy students in New York medical schools and postgraduate nursing programs. This practice continued until appropriate legislation in the 1950s created college and nursing scholarships.³⁵

In 1945, to help in its distribution of funds, the GSBA established the Grand Street Boys' Foundation. Served by a board of thirty-five trustees, all of whom were GSBA members, the foundation was set up with a portfolio that included the clubhouse, as well as more than \$1

million in cash and gilt-edged securities. This sizable sum would allow the GSBA to assist many individuals, colleges, and organizations in the years ahead.³⁶

Religious and Cultural Activities

In 1945, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the GSBA, Goldstein stated: "The GSBA advocates substituting the symphony orchestra in place of the melting pot, as a symbol of America. . . . in the symphony of peoples in America, there is room for the social expression of all peoples."³⁷

The GSBA made an extraordinary effort not to identify itself solely as a Jewish organization though its membership and prime financial supporters were overwhelmingly Jewish. In addition to its annual Chanukah party, the association, in March, held a St. Patrick's Day party with corned beef and beer. In October was the Columbus Day party with Italian food. Rather than have a priest or minister deliver the invocation at these special events, the association invited three Boy Scouts, one from each major faith, to say grace.³⁸

What Goldstein did not say about the symphony of America was that all peoples could play in it, but no specific people could toot their horn louder than the rest. Thus, the association had an understanding that there would be no table exclusively for Jews at the annual Chanukah party. At least four of the ten at each table were expected to be Gentiles. Similarly, throughout its history, the GSBA took care to ensure that its heavily Jewish composition did not dominate its activities.³⁹

Politician Members

An examination of the membership rolls of the GSBA in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s reveals that a large number of its members held political office. Its early officers and board of directors included many judges and at least one congressman. The membership roll for 1922 included a half-dozen judges, three state assemblymen, two state senators, and a borough president.⁴⁰ In 1945, its members included Senators Robert Wagner and James Mead, former Governor Herbert Lehman, Mayor La Guardia, six congressmen, five state senators, seven assemblymen, and twenty State Supreme Court justices.⁴¹

Though not all the members of the GSBA held political office, a great many of them were actively involved in partisan politics. One political historian, writing in 1935, stated that the membership "looks for all the world like a census of the leading spirits of Tammany Hall."⁴² Goldstein had served as Al Smith's assistant, and thus had been involved with Tammany Hall politics. Al Smith was feted several times by the association. Jimmy Walker, another Tammany product, was associated with the group from the beginning. Ferdinand Pecora, who annually installed Goldstein in office for over twenty-five years, was called "one of the ablest Italian Democrats."⁴³ A close look at the party affiliations of GSBA members would show that the majority of them were active Democrats.

The heavily Democratic makeup of the GSBA reflects the general political trend of New York Jews in the twenties, thirties, and forties. At the turn of the century, the East European Jews followed the uptown Jews' lead and voted Republican, but by the early 1920s they were beginning to favor the Democratic Party. This can be explained by the decline of the Socialist Party following World War I, and the appeal of Al Smith, who championed urban social reforms which appealed to Jewish voters. By the 1930s, many Jews saw their liberalism reflected in the policies of the Democrats. Given the GSBA's liberal goals, it was quite natural for its membership to be largely Democratic.⁴⁴

The GSBA as a Political Club

Though the GSBA's charter made no mention of political activities, nonetheless, it had a distinctly political flavor. This can be best explained if we see the association as a quasi-political club; though it did no fundraising for political parties and did not formally endorse candidates, it did bring political leaders and laymen in close contact with one another.

New York, in 1932, had more than 3,100 quasi-political clubs.⁴⁵ Like the GSBA, many of them existed to preserve "the intimacies of adult males who had 'grown up together' in certain sections [of the city]."⁴⁶ They often took the form of boys' clubs, of which the GSBA is a prime example. Manhattan, in 1932, boasted twenty-eight other boys' associations besides the GSBA.⁴⁷

Through the social contacts and friendships established in the quasi-political clubs, the aspiring politician continued to build his political base. The GSBA certainly functioned in this way. One member stated: "... for the few dollars a year dues, you were a fool if you were a politician and didn't join the GSBA."⁴⁸

Not only was the association an important meeting ground for politicians and their prospective supporters, but for lawyers as well. It gave lawyers the opportunity to mix socially with judges before whom they would later appear in court. The GSBA, however, was careful to avoid any charges of impropriety. Goldstein, in his address to new members, warned them that if they were joining the association solely to curry favor with certain other members, they would be sorely disappointed. One member recalled that at gala events, when photographers were present, judges were very careful to screen who sat with them at their tables.⁴⁹

While the GSBA's membership reflected the composition of other quasi-political associations, its social, civic, and welfare events paralleled the activities of New York's political clubs. These clubs engaged not only in formal political campaigns, but in various community projects.⁵⁰ Political clubs held annual or semiannual balls, dinners of all kinds, and outings to parks and entertainment centers.⁵¹ They maintained athletic teams and supported neighborhood athletic clubs. The political clubs were also involved with welfare activities: dispensing holiday baskets to the poor and clothes to the needy, giving gifts to orphans and assistance to veterans. The political clubs also sponsored activities for children, such as Children's Day, when poor children in the political district were treated to free food, games, and gifts.⁵² Through these activities, the political clubs were able to build up neighborhood goodwill toward their party or toward their political candidate.

One of the more striking parallels between the activities of the GSBA and the political clubs of New York can be seen in their celebration of national holidays. In the political club, celebrations of national holidays were "usually social affairs, with elements of politics, civic education and welfare inextricably interwoven."⁵³ On Columbus Day, the GSBA followed suit: a wreath was laid on Columbus's statue, speeches were given on the immigrant and democracy in America, and a social dinner was held at the clubhouse.

This is not to suggest that the members of the GSBA pursued their charitable and social activities for political ends, but rather, that their model of what a social, civic association should engage in was taken from the political clubs of the time.⁵⁴ The fraternal nature of the association found its roots in the *chevra* and *landsmanschaft*, its specific membership reflected the American quasi-political club, and its civic, welfare, and social activities were modeled after those of the political club. Traditional communal institutions and American organizations thus met one another in the GSBA.

Conclusions

The GSBA demonstrates that by the 1920s the children of the first wave of immigrants had not only “come of age,” but in many cases had achieved political power and/or financial success. Though many of them had physically left the Lower East Side by the 1920s to settle in the surrounding boroughs, they still utilized the old neighborhood as a social reference point. It was this generation that first created the myth of the “good old days” on the Lower East Side.

The GSBA also reflects the beginning of Jewish ethnicity in America. It demonstrates that for many second-generation Jews, propinquity alone served as the basis for Jewish identity. Having a common neighborhood, subscribing to the same liberal social goals, and socializing together became ways to identify oneself as a Jew. Being Jewish, for the second generation, could be achieved by simply being with Jews. The GSBA further highlights the inner insecurity for some second-generation Jews. They did not call attention to their Jewishness. Jewish activities were permitted, but only providing that other religious and cultural groups were given equal time.

The GSBA also demonstrates that second-generation Jews were, in increasing numbers, becoming Democratic, and embodies the beginning of the process which equated Jewishness with liberalism. Finally, the GSBA provides a prime example of how second-generation Jews combined traditional communal institutions with American organizations to arrive at their own unique form of community.

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Dr. Israel Augenblick, z"l, a former Grand Street boy and member of the GSBA.

1. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, pp. 38–39; *ibid.*, 1925, p. "o"; *Wuxtra, Special*, January 1936. Otto Rosalsky was fictionalized in Samuel Ornitz's *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*.

2. Jonah Goldstein, "It Can Be Done; or, The Grand Street Story" (unpublished MS, ca. 1959), p. 57; *GSBA Yearbook*, 1925, p. o. Though the 1937 yearbook states that the group first met in Odd Fellows Hall on Forsyth Street and then met in the Hotel Pennsylvania (later to be the Statler), I cannot find any mention of this in the early documents. It may be that informal meetings were held in Odd Fellows Hall between February 1, 1920 and the end of March, but again this is not certain. The original charter currently hangs in the GSBA clubhouse in New York. See also *GSBA Yearbook*, 1937, p. 3, and 1941, p. 17. Though 1920 witnessed an explosion of private clubs and organizations due to Prohibition, liquor was apparently not served by the organization during this time. Even in later years, its members were apparently not a drinking crowd.

3. The idea for the plaque came from A. Alex Edelman, one of the founders of the GSBA. He explained that his inspiration came from the old Market Street booths. "In those days the 'bare-foot boys' would stand outside the booths planning the spending of the day's earnings for sweets. . . . By pooling the day's earnings, the three could have one-half of a sandwich each." *Wuxtra*, March 1939, p. 2. Jonah Goldstein explained that the boys are holding a bolivar (a collapsed ginger or molasses cake). "It Can Be Done," p. 8; *Wuxtra*, March 1939, p. 2. The earliest appearance of the emblem I can find is in January of 1922. A plaque bearing the emblem can be found in the Grand Street file at the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS).

4. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, pp. 38–39; *ibid.*, 1925, pp. K, L, O and P; 1941, p. 17; Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 6–7; Membership folder, GSBA file, Box 1, AJHS.

5. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, pp. 38–39. See also the membership list, pp. 305–321.

6. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, pp. 305–321 and p. 4. See also Correspondence: Membership folder in Grand Street file, Box 2, AJHS, for partial list of 1920 and 1921 members.

7. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1925, advertisements. Jonah Goldstein defined a Grand Street Boy as one who "once lived on East Broadway . . . learned the facts of life on Allen Street . . . was in business on 7th Avenue—and lived on Central Park West." Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, New York, 1981), p. 67. The business locations and neighborhoods of the GSBA members were even further spread out than Goldstein's words suggest.

8. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, pp. 1, 34. The distancing is even more pronounced in the 1938 yearbook: "Once upon a time there lived on the East Side . . ." (p. 3).

9. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, p. 34.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

11. Moore, *At Home in America*, pp. 19, 67, 68.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 66, 67.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 126. In 1917 there were at least 1,000 *landsmanshaftn* in New York with which many of the early GSBA members would have had direct or indirect contact. See Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 20, and Michael R. Weisser, *A Brotherhood of Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 5.

14. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1925, pp. K, L, 430; *ibid.*, 1928, pp. 3, 11. The ladies' auxiliary disap-

peared within a few years. The multireligious and multinational composition of the Lower East Side may have affected, to some degree, the initial decision to officially open the association to all former East Siders, and not just to Jews.

15. Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), p. 265.

16. Clarke A. Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1963), p. 24.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 102. For a further account of this shift in social work during the twenties, see *ibid.*, pp. 99–106.

18. Moore, *At Home in America*, pp. 4, 13, 15, 201, 228, 229.

19. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1928, p. 11.

20. The exact date of the post's formation is uncertain. The 1931 yearbook suggests sometime after February 1930 (p. 4); the 1942 yearbook states July 1930 (p. 19); the 1945 yearbook gives the charter date as March 1, 1929 (p. 22); while the 1968 *Wuxtra* states that it was March 1928 (p. 2).

21. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1938, pp. 13–14; *ibid.*, 1945, pp. 20–21; Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 7; interviews with GSBA members, Spring 1982 (the members interviewed, some of whom were still active members of the bar, did not wish their names used, and I have respected their wishes).

22. Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 7.

23. "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein" (Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1967), pp. 120–122. Max Levine died in 1933, and was succeeded in office for two years by Henry Sobel.

24. Interview, Spring 1982.

25. Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 1; "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," pp. 1–2, 7–8; *New York Times*, July 23, 1967, p. 60; interviews with GSBA members, Spring 1982. As has already been noted, the social reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries devoted themselves to such issues as the deprivation of civil liberties, the denial of first-class citizenship to blacks, and the dependency of old age. Having worked in the settlement movement, Goldstein may have been influenced by these issues. Certainly, the last two were not raised by the GSBA until his presidency. See Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform*, p. xi.

26. See Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, pp. 166–169, nn. 21–20, pp. 292–293; and "Hon. Jonah J. Goldstein Oral History Memoir" (William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee, 1964, 1965), pp. 2–3.

27. Abe Shoenfeld, the bureau's chief investigator, reported that gang associates of Dopey Benny familiarly called Goldstein "Joney." "They [Jonah and his brother Dave] lived off these people [the gangsters] . . . they worked on these people, he was their boy, Jonah." "Abe Shoenfeld Oral Memoir" (William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee, 1965), pp. 76, 79; "Hon. Jonah J. Goldstein Oral History Memoir," p. 113; Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, p. 293, n. 25. Goldstein certainly never denied knowing many of the Jewish underworld characters, having grown up with them as a boy on the Lower East Side. See *Wuxtra, Special*, January 1936, p. 3.

28. In 1920, when Goldstein married Harriet Loewenstein, who had worked for many years as Felix Warburg's secretary, he asked her to return a cottage she had been given which was located on Warburg's estate. Goldstein felt that former East Siders would not be able to visit him there and that he himself would never feel at home in it. "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," p. 42.

29. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1939, p. 9; *New York Herald Tribune*, June 4, 1945 and June 6, 1949.

30. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1938, pp. 16–18; *ibid.*, 1941, pp. 29–33; *Wuxtra*, May 1948, p. 3;

Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 43–45, 47. Goldstein related that Danny Taylor, a champion-ship track man, had been invited to become a member of the New York Athletic Club. When it became known that his original name was Schneider, he was dropped from consideration. This episode, according to Goldstein, prompted him to urge the GSBA to sponsor a mixed religious and racial team. See "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," pp. 122–123.

31. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1938, p. 3. One reason for the change was the association's recognition that the pool of former Lower East Side residents was becoming smaller. See Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 4; "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," p. 122. There apparently was also a middle step in the association's history of membership requirements: being the son of someone who grew up on the Lower East Side.

32. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1938, p. 11; *ibid.*, 1942, p. 2.

33. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1938, p. 11; *ibid.*, 1939, p. 2; *ibid.*, 1942, p. 15; Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 6; "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," pp. 95–96. Other essay titles included "Democracy—What Are We Defending" and "Why I Bless America."

34. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1942, p. 15; *New York Jewish Review*, February 1, 1945; Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 83–84.

35. Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 90–92, 94, 97, 100, 104–107; "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," p. 58. The shortage of nurses during World War II may be one reason the association became involved in this area of scholarships (see the ads for nurses in the 1945 yearbook).

36. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1946, unnumbered page headed "Grand St. Boys' Foundation"; *New York Herald Tribune*, November 9, 1950. Lester Martin, president of the Consolidated Textile Company, was the primary benefactor of the foundation, establishing one of its funds with initial gifts of \$200,000. See Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 57, 166–168; "Reminiscences of Judge Jonah Goldstein," pp. 56–57.

37. *New York Jewish Review*, February 1, 1945. Goldstein had actually expressed this idea six years earlier in the February 1939 issue of *Wuxtra*. Ironically, the image had already been used by Judah Magnes, who in 1909 said: "The symphony of America must be written by the various nationalities which keep their individualistic and characteristic note." See Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, p. 4. See also the works of Horace Kallen.

38. Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," p. 48.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 49. Only rarely in the history of the association does its Jewish composition inadvertently slip out. In the *18th Anniversary Yearbook* (1938, p. 8), Goldstein remarked that he had learned from his teacher that the word for 18 in Hebrew means "life." In his unpublished history of the association, Goldstein stated that he would not publish the names of scholarship recipients "because we are firm believers in the Talmudic inhibition to spotlight the recipient of philanthropy" (p. 103). In the sixty-one years of official publications, newspaper clippings, correspondence, speeches, and memos, I only came across *two* printed uses of Yiddish, one in the first issue of *Wuxtra* (January 1939, p. 3) and the other in an introductory speech made at one of Goldstein's annual presidential reinductions. Yiddish was spoken in the clubhouse, but only in small, private conversations. None of the association's members were to be made to feel left out or uncomfortable. One member recalled that it was a "no-no" to tell religious or ethnic jokes inside the clubhouse. Interview, Spring 1982.

40. *GSBA Yearbook*, 1922, p. 39.

41. *Ibid.*, 1945, pp. 32–33; *New York Times*, February 21, 1945.

42. Roy V. Peel, *The Political Clubs of New York City* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), pp. 307–308.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 254; Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, pp. 161, 166, 167.

Pecora also ran for New York mayor in 1950. *New York Herald Tribune*, November 11, 1950.

44. Moore, *At Home in America*, chap. 8, "The Rise of the Jewish Democrat."

45. Peel, *Political Clubs of New York*, p. 310; see also pp. 83, 84, 120, 124-130.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

47. Peel, *Political Clubs of New York*, p. 315. Such boys' clubs included the Gramercy, Henry Street, and First Avenue Boys.

48. Interview, Spring 1982.

49. Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 2-3; Interview, Spring 1982. Goldstein, in *Wuxtra*, February 1938, p. 2, proudly quoted from a guidebook to New York which stated that the GSBA was "a social, benevolent, athletic, non-political organization." While being a member of the GSBA did not automatically guarantee favors, friends and political contacts made through the association could often be of help. In 1941, for example, Goldstein was able to get a dispensation from the archbishop so that meat could be served at a Friday birthday party involving Catholic members! Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 2-3, 49, 50.

50. Peel, *Political Clubs of New York*, pp. 129, 130, 133, 184, 321.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-177, 165-166, 181-182.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-171, 209-210, 213. The GSBA held an annual "Back to Grand Street" event, where free entertainment for the children and adults of the area was provided.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

54. The GSBA was somewhat selective in its modeling process, for some political clubs engaged in antisocial activities, such as gambling and racketeering, which the GSBA most certainly avoided. Despite its male emphasis, the family seemed to be important to the GSBA, for, unlike other clubs, it closed well before midnight. For the GSBA observance of Columbus Day, see Goldstein, "It Can Be Done," pp. 48, 63.