

Henry Mack: An Important Figure in Nineteenth-Century American Jewish History

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In many ways, Henry Mack was the embodiment of the American dream. He pioneered his clan's trek to America. He climbed the economic ladder from penniless immigrant peddler to wealthy mercantile prince. He was an early leader in American Reform Judaism. He was active in Cincinnati and Ohio politics and, inadvertently, played a role in the 1868 presidential elections. Since his death nearly a century ago, Henry Mack's name has faded into obscurity. The following biographical sketch, I hope, will reveal why, as the centennial of his death approaches, he should again be recognized as one of the important figures in nineteenth-century American Jewish history.

Family Origins

The Mack family traces its roots back to the old German kingdom of Bavaria. It was not until the Napoleonic Wars that German states required their Jewish citizens to adopt surnames.¹ Before surnames were adopted, a German-Jewish male was often identified by a given name to which was added the name of the village in which he was born. Therefore, when the patriarch of the Mack clan was born early in the eighteenth century, he was called Moses aus Kups (Moses from [the town of] Kups). As Moses grew into adulthood, though the state had yet to require it, he desired a surname. To his chagrin, he learned that in order to obtain a surname, one had to pay a fee to the government at a cost proportional to the length of the name chosen. Because Moses, like all rural Bavarian Jews, was poor, he was obliged to pick a short name. Family tradition relates that he created his surname from the acronym *Moses aus Kups*. The name Mack acquired its modern spelling when a *c* was later slipped in.²

Two generations later, a Mack family crest already existed. The image consisted of a tree with the sun shining through its leaves. Surrounding the image were the German words *Ohne Dich Tod*, referring to the fact that without sunlight, the tree would die. The symbolic meaning of the crest has been long forgotten.³ The adoption of a family crest, like the adoption of a family name, was not required and would even seem pretentious of a poor rural Jewish family. These actions likely indicate that the Macks, like many of their Jewish contemporaries, were motivated by a desire to be the economic and social peers of their German Gentile countrymen. As we shall see, it was this emotional undercurrent that would eventually draw the family to American shores.

Over the generations, the Macks dispersed throughout northern Bavaria. The Mack name can be found in the birth and marriage records as well as on the gravestones of towns long ago abandoned, depopulated by the exodus to America—towns such as Altenkunstadt and Demmelsdorf⁴

Early Years in Germany

It was in Demmelsdorf that Henry Mack was born on December 23, 1820. Henry and his three siblings, all boys, grew up in the reactionary sociopolitical climate that followed Napoleon's defeat. The freedoms granted Jews during the reign of Napoleon were swiftly repealed, and nowhere were these winds of change stronger than in Bavaria.⁵

Henry's formal education was limited, though he would become a champion of education later in his life. His education was sufficient enough to earn him, at age thirteen, the position of copyist for the local clerk of courts. At age sixteen, he was apprenticed to a confectioner, and he became a master of the trade two years later.⁶

It was at this time that Henry and his older brother, Abraham, decided to leave their birthplace for America. Though religious oppression likely played a part in their decision, economic oppression was the principal force driving the brothers and many other Bavarian Jews from their homeland. Economic depression gripped central Europe, particularly Southwestern Germany, during the 1830s⁷

Moreover, the German states created laws that clearly intended to

keep Jews impoverished second-class citizens. Special taxes were levied on them. Other laws pressured them away from commerce and into vocational and handicraft trades. Thus, it is doubtful that Henry chose to enter or remain in the confection guild. Another Bavarian edict imposed a unique form of primogeniture upon the Jews. The edict prohibited all but the eldest Jewish son from owning property, marrying, and obtaining citizenship. This law may have been the final straw, as it struck against such fundamental values as family, personal rights, and financial security. If Henry and Abraham, the second- and third-oldest Mack brothers, remained in Bavaria, they would be subject to this law. With such sanctions in place, it is little wonder that most Jews entering the United States between 1830 and 1850 were Germans, typically from small towns in northern Bavaria, and were rarely firstborn sons.⁸

With their parents' consent, Henry and Abraham left Demmelsdorf on July 28, 1839. They made their way to Hamburg, 300 miles to the north, traveling the entire way on foot. They set sail from Hamburg on August 17 and arrived in New York City ten weeks later.⁹ They may have met up with an old acquaintance from Demmelsdorf who was already living in New York. This was a common practice through which a "seasoned" immigrant helped his "greenhorn" townsmen to adjust to their adopted country. The Mack brothers, in turn, would later help another Demmelsdorf immigrant named Louis Stix.¹⁰

Business Success in Cincinnati

Once settled in New York City, Henry and Abraham used their remaining \$15 to purchase goods to peddle around the countryside. By the spring of 1840, they had parlayed that \$15 into \$500. Louis Stix arrived the following spring, and once reunited the three men decided to travel west to Cincinnati.¹¹ But why Cincinnati? Certainly the Macks were not alone in making the Queen City of the West their destination. Between 1840 and 1860, the Jewish population of Cincinnati grew from 1,000 to 7,500 persons, making it the largest concentration of "Israelites" west of the Atlantic coast.¹²

Several factors drew German Jews to Cincinnati. Most obvious were the economic opportunities that drew Jews and Gentiles alike to the American frontier. Also, by 1840, a thriving German community



*Henry Mack, ca. 1860s
(courtesy of Michael W. Rich)*



*Rosalie Mack, wife of Henry, ca. 1860s
(courtesy of Michael W. Rich)*

already existed in Cincinnati. Cultural and linguistic barriers were therefore reduced.¹³ Cincinnati had already developed a reputation as a "sort of paradise for Hebrews" where Jews were more readily accepted economically and socially than in other communities.¹⁴ Until this time, American Jews had huddled in a few major communities along the East Coast out of fear that the frontier would wrest from them their religious identity. But by 1840 a substantial, if not flourishing, Jewish community already existed, so that a Jewish Cincinnati need not worry for lack of opportunity to remain pious. As word of this "paradise" got back to Bavaria, a chain migration occurred. In Demmelsdorf, for example, at least thirty young males out of a total Jewish population of 136 made the trek to Cincinnati between 1830 and 1865.¹⁵ Many of them would figure prominently in the history of Cincinnati; among their names were Mack, Stix, Stadler, Pritz, and Krauss. Once reacquainted in the New World, townsmen formed tight bonds that resulted in lifelong friendships (e.g., the Macks and Louis Stix), business partnerships (e.g., the Macks and Stadlers), and even marriages (e.g., the Macks and Stadlers).

The details of the trip from New York City to Cincinnati were recorded by Louis Stix in his memoirs. Abraham Mack took charge of the travel arrangements. The first leg of the journey, from New York to Albany, was made by Hudson River steamboat. Schenectady was reached next by railroad, and from there Buffalo by canal boat. Abraham had contracted with the canal boat captain to reach Buffalo in time to catch a boat to Cleveland. When they arrived too late, Abraham threatened to sue the canal boat captain for breach of contract. While awaiting the next boat to Cleveland, they learned that the first boat had caught fire on Lake Erie and that most of its passengers had perished. In light of this "providential escape," the suit was dropped. Most of the remaining leg of the journey, from Cleveland to Cincinnati, was made by canal.¹⁶

Once in Cincinnati, Henry began peddling the countryside with a horse and wagon, while his brother opened a butcher shop. The following spring, Henry opened a general store at Monroe, Ohio. Having prospered in Monroe, he soon opened a second store at Felicity, Ohio.¹⁷

At this juncture several important events occurred in Henry's

personal life. On November 1, 1844 he became a naturalized U.S. citizen.¹⁸ In 1845, he sold his Felicity store and had Abraham manage his Monroe store so that he could return to Bavaria, where their mother was terminally ill. She died three weeks before he reached Demmelsdorf.¹⁹ Henry returned to Ohio, where he married Rosalie Mack, a distant cousin, on September 15, 1846.²⁰

Henry now closed his Monroe store and opened a dry-goods store with Abraham in Cincinnati. Following his mother's death, the remainder of Henry's immediate family (brothers Harmon and Simon plus father Moses) joined him in Cincinnati. In the spring of 1847, all four brothers formed the clothing firm of Mack and Brothers.²¹

Early on, the firm foundered and nearly failed. Fortunately, the business weathered the storm, with Henry once and for all taking the financial helm. By 1852, the credit-rating firm of Dun and Company reported that Mack and Brothers' credit was "rather better; have done well the past year ... nearly doubled their capital in the last 2 years ... large business worth 25 [thousand dollars]."²²

Henry Mack's career was typical of the successful German-Jewish immigrants of that era. The immigrant began peddling through the countryside, perhaps acquiring a pushcart or a horse and wagon. With some luck and a great deal of hard work, a peddler might purchase a retail store in an outlying town, as Henry did in Monroe and Felicity. With further success, he might go beyond retailing to become a wholesaler or manufacturer in a city, as Henry did in Cincinnati.²³

His career was also typical in his entrance into the manufacture and sale of ready-made men's apparel. By 1860, more than half of Cincinnati's Jewish populace was employed in the clothing industry. Sixty-five of the city's seventy wholesale clothing firms were owned by Jews. The surge in the clothing industry was initiated by Singer's invention of the sewing machine and received further impetus from the demand for uniforms during the Civil War.²⁴

The groundwork for the Mack Brothers' success had been laid. The 1856 entry in the Dun and Company Reports found that the brothers, "incredible as it may seem ... have now in monthly business upward of 90 thousand dollars." The entry goes on to describe the Macks as "all married; excellent character and fine habit; fine capacity; accounted perfectly honorable and are first rate credit here."²⁵

As noted, the Civil War was a boon for the garment industry in

general, but particularly so for the Mack brothers. In 1861, Ohio Governor William Dennison awarded the state's first army clothing contract to the Macks. Soon afterwards, the firm of Mack, Stadler, and Glazer was created to execute the army contract. The separate firms of Mack and Bros., Stadler and Bros., and Glazer and Bros. continued independently throughout the war to fulfill their private business obligations. Mack, Stadler, and Glazer would become one of the Union's leading contractors. During a four-month period in 1861, the firm manufactured nearly 200,000 articles of clothing.²⁶ The financial gain from these contracts caused the value of Mack and Brothers to climb from \$100,000 before the war to a postwar figure of \$500,000!²⁷

With the close of the war, Mack, Stadler, and Glazer dissolved. Abraham Mack had quit the business in 1858, perhaps due to health problems resulting from tuberculosis. In 1876, brother Simon left in order to join Glazer and Bros. in forming Mack, Glazer, and Company clothiers in New York City. The remaining Mack brothers, Henry and Harmon, then combined with Stadler and Bros. to form Mack, Stadler, and Company in 1868. Henry and Harmon were "each considered wealthy," and their new firm was "one of the leading houses" in the clothing industry.²⁸ The firm would remain strong for another two decades. By 1890, Henry Mack had retired in order to give his full attention to his public and religious activities.²⁹

Embroidered with the Grants

Though contemporary accounts described Henry as "honorable" and of "excellent character,"³⁰ it was through a shady business deal that he gained some notoriety and impacted inadvertently on national politics. The episode in question revolved around the father of General Ulysses S. Grant.

Although the Civil War, as mentioned, created a huge market for uniforms, it was a mixed blessing for the clothing industry because it threatened to cut off the raw material, cotton, that was required to meet that demand. Because the cotton trade helped finance the Confederate war effort, the federal government gradually prohibited commerce in Southern cotton. The effect of this restriction was to drive up cotton prices, from 10 cents per pound in 1860 to 68 cents per

pound just two years later. Speculators managed to maintain some cotton flow to the North, albeit a trickle, through legal loopholes and the black market.³¹

In August 1862, Ulysses S. Grant became the commander of the Army of the Tennessee. The Department of the Tennessee encompassed portions of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi, and served as the major portal for the illicit cotton trade.³²

In December 1862, Jesse Grant (the general's father) and the Mack brothers struck a deal. Jesse Grant signed a contract promising to use his influence with his son to obtain a special permit that would allow the Macks to trade with the Confederacy. The Macks, in return, promised to provide the money and to share one-fourth of their profits from the trade with Jesse.³³

That same month, Jesse wrote to and visited his son in an effort to fulfill his part of the bargain. One of the Macks also reportedly visited the general. When Ulysses Grant refused to sign a permit, the Macks withdrew from the agreement. Jesse Grant responded by suing them for breach of contract. The Cincinnati courts ruled in favor of the defendants.³⁴

The case would have remained buried in some dust-covered docket book had it not been for the infamous General Order No. 11. Though American Jews have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and tolerance, anti-Semitism often runs quietly under the surface. In trying times, Americans frequently turn their Jewish neighbors into scapegoats. An often-cited example of this phenomenon occurred in the wake of the Grant-Mack contract.

Many Northerners, including General Grant, considered trade with the Confederacy as tantamount to treason and believed the Jews were the principal conspirators in the illicit cotton trade. In truth, only a fraction of these traders were Jewish. Historians have concluded that the failed Grant-Mack deal was the final straw causing Grant to issue Order No. 11, which proclaimed that "Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established... are hereby expelled from the department within the twenty-four hours." A public uproar followed and a delegation of leading Jewish citizens traveled to Washington to meet with President Lincoln. Lincoln immediately revoked the order.³⁵ Historian Bruce Catton summarized the motives behind Order No. 11:

Back of this order were two moving causes. . . . The obvious immediate one was cotton [speculation]. . . . What had touched Grant off was the alliance made by his father [with the Macks]. . . . But the invisible cause of the order — the thing that turned it from a simple tightening up of controls on illicit cotton brokerage into a blind, shotgun blast at the Jewish people — was the fact that Grant at all times reflected the age in which he lived.³⁶

The incident would have again faded into obscurity had it not been for Grant's 1868 campaign for the presidency. Realizing how unlikely they were to defeat the Republican war hero, the Democrats revived the Grant-Mack fiasco. The Democratic press twisted the story so as to insinuate that Grant had used his influence to help his father speculate on the cotton market.³⁷ The Democrats also tried to use Order No. 11 to make him appear an anti-Semite.³⁸ Though the scandal failed to derail his candidacy, Grant later appointed several Jews to important federal posts. These appointments may have been an attempt to quiet the accusations of anti-Semitism raised by the affair.³⁹

Contributions to Reform Judaism

In his day, Henry Mack was recognized for his commercial success, but it was through his contribution to Judaism that his influence continues to be felt. He was an important pioneer and catalyst in American Reform Judaism.

Napoleonic Germany was the birthplace of Reform Judaism, and its ideas were brought to the United States by German-Jewish immigrants. Many of them viewed Orthodox Judaism as cumbersome and feared that its unique garb, language, and style of worship might alienate their non-Jewish neighbors. The Reform movement was the means through which they adapted their religion to their new homeland. Some Reform practices were initially instituted by a handful of American synagogues. Lasting and widespread reformation, however, required a leader with the foresight, energy, determination, motivational skills, and organizational skills needed to transform ideas into reality. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise was this man, and with Henry Mack's assistance, he led the reformation.⁴⁰

Cincinnati's first congregation, Bene Israel, was founded in 1824 by Jews from England. The influx of German Jews during the next decade resulted in an ethnic rift and eventually to the formation of the predominantly German congregation Bene Yeshurun in 1840.⁴¹ When Henry moved to Cincinnati in 1846, he joined the new congregation and immediately assumed a leadership role. With the exception of his friend Rabbi Wise, it was Henry Mack who did the most to transform Bene Yeshurun into the leading Reform congregation in the United States. He was a central figure in nearly every major undertaking of the congregation over the next half-century. By the time of his death, worship in Bene Yeshurun had taken on all the trappings of modern Reform Judaism. Services were shortened, held in the vernacular, and accompanied by organ and choir music. Male congregants worshipped with their heads uncovered and were no longer segregated from female congregants.⁴² The same trends had spread throughout the country, for by 1880, the majority of American Jews belonged to Reform's fifty congregations and were of Central European origin.⁴³

When Henry Mack joined Bene Yeshurun, its congregants worshipped in a rented room. As the congregation grew in numbers and wealth, it was decided to erect a synagogue building. In 1847, when the congregation ran out of funds for the construction, Henry was chosen to head a new building committee. Under his guidance, the necessary funds were raised to complete the structure, which opened its doors on Lodge Street in 1848.⁴⁴

That December, at a meeting of the congregation, Henry proposed the creation of a primary school where Jewish children might be taught both religious and secular subjects. His proposal was probably a response to the poor quality of the Cincinnati public schools. The Jewish community considered a good education to be the key to social and economic advancement. Henry's idea was received enthusiastically, and one year later students were enrolled in the new Talmud Yelodim Institute. Henry served on the school's first board of trustees. The Institute was considered by many to be the city's finest primary school. It was closed in 1868 due to improvements in the public school system.⁴⁵

The congregation next turned its attention to finding a permanent rabbi. Since its formation, Bene Yeshurun had endured a rapid succes-

sion of rabbis. By 1852, most of the congregants had become interested in religious reforms. And this majority, of course, sought a spiritual leader who embodied their vision of Judaism. In a letter to the *Occident* in July 1852, Henry complained that the congregation "had never had a minister who could gain sufficiently the confidence of the people in promotion of true religion."⁴⁶ The search for a permanent rabbi ended with Isaac M. Wise. During the fall of 1853, Henry and a few colleagues wooed Wise away from his rabbinical post in Albany, New York.⁴⁷

Wise quickly set the tone for his tenure. He called together a meeting of Cincinnati Jewry to discuss the creation of a Jewish university. Henry Mack chaired this meeting, at which the Zion Collegiate Association was founded and given the charge of raising the money to create a Jewish center of higher learning. A banquet celebrating the college's opening was attended by such dignitaries as the governor of Ohio, Salmon P. Chase, who would later become Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Zion College opened in the fall of 1856, but, due to flagging enrollment, closed after only a few years. Though it lacked staying power, lessons learned from the college's demise were later applied by Wise and Mack to the creation of the successful Hebrew Union College.⁴⁸

Religious reformation may have contributed to the financial and social success of the American Jew. If they progressed unchecked, however, reforms threatened to erode Jewish identity. For example, due to the financial pressures of running a business in a Gentile world (e.g., Sunday laws), most Jewish businessmen kept their factories and shops open on Saturdays. Henry was disturbed by this affront to his faith. Consequently, in 1850, he led a group of Cincinnati's prominent Jewish businessmen into organizing the Resolution Regarding Sabbath Observance. Henry chaired this meeting, at which thirty-two Jewish wholesalers resolved to keep their stores and factories closed on Saturdays if an additional twenty-five wholesalers pledged to do the same. In other communities across America, attempts were made to preserve the Jewish Sabbath, but none, including Cincinnati's, had much impact. As a result, observance of the Sabbath in modern America belongs primarily to the Orthodox.⁴⁹

Henry Mack's next task was to help Bene Yeshurun build a new house of worship, as it had outgrown the Lodge Street Synagogue.

Working with his brother Simon and cousin Max J. Mack, he was a central figure in the planning, financing, and construction of the new edifice. A plot of land was purchased at the corner of Plum and Eighth Streets. The building was to be called a temple rather than a synagogue, in keeping with the congregation's Reform style of worship. Planning began in 1860, but construction was delayed by the Civil War. On May 12, 1865 a procession of 2,000 Cincinnatians, including the mayor and several councilmen, made its way from the old Lodge Street Synagogue to the future site of the Plum Street Temple. The ceremony culminated in the reading of the congregation's history by Henry and then his laying of the cornerstone. On August 24, 1866, following the structure's completion, a similar procession occurred, this time highlighted by a dedication ceremony. During the dedication, Henry received the key to the new temple from his daughter Henrietta. The temple was an impressive addition to Cincinnati's skyline and remains standing today, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Two minarets accent its Byzantine design. It cost a quarter of a million dollars to build, an extraordinary sum in those days, and boasts a seating capacity of more than 2,000 people. The Plum Street Temple symbolized the influence and wealth of the congregation it housed.⁵⁰

Perhaps the most important and holy duty of a new Jewish settlement was the early establishment of a place to bury the dead. The Chestnut Street Cemetery served that purpose for Cincinnati until 1849, when the Walnut Hills Cemetery was created. In 1854, the city's two major congregations, Bene Yeshurun and Bene Israel, adopted the land as their common burial ground, renaming it the United Jewish Cemetery.⁵¹ Henry Mack served on its first board of directors.⁵² The layout of the cemetery reflected the thinking of the Reform movement. In traditional European burial grounds, men and women were buried in separate sections and in the order of their death, irrespective of family ties. In America, Jews established family plots.⁵³ Henry Mack would eventually be interred in the cemetery that he helped establish, where he now lies alongside his wife, father, mother-in-law, and three of his children.

Since his arrival in Cincinnati, Rabbi Isaac M. Wise had wanted to establish a center of higher learning where Jewish men could be trained to become rabbis.⁵⁴ American congregations had relied on the

immigration of rabbis from Europe to fill their pulpits.⁵⁵ To create an American Jewish seminary as well as to meet other goals (such as a common Reform liturgy), Wise and Henry Mack organized a meeting of thirty-four of the nation's Reform congregations.⁵⁶ This meeting, held in 1873, created the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Within its first year of existence, the fledgling UAHC had established the Hebrew Union College and elected Henry Mack to preside over the College's first board of governors. The College, built in Cincinnati, opened its doors in 1875 and today continues to train the nation's Reform rabbis.⁵⁷

Mack's dedication to Bene Yeshurun is obvious from the preceding description of tasks he undertook. During his nearly fifty years in its fold, he served at various times as trustee, secretary, and twice as the congregation's president.⁵⁸

Politics

Once Henry Mack established his financial success as a clothier, he was able to spend time and energy in public service. At the time that he entered public life, it was uncommon for Jews to be found in politics.

Mack was twice elected to the Cincinnati city council, first in 1859 and again in 1860. He introduced the bill that provided for the city's first public transit system. He was also the guiding force behind the development of Cincinnati's modern sewage system. By mid-century, it was realized that poor sanitation was a cause of epidemics. Three major cholera epidemics struck the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. One of Henry's children died in the 1849 epidemic, and it may have been the memory of this tragedy that set him to the task of improving the Queen City's sanitation.⁵⁹

In 1861, Ohio Governor Tod appointed Mack to the Hamilton County Military Committee. He chaired the committee through most of the Civil War.⁶⁰ State military committees became a centerpiece in the controversy about personal rights during the national crisis. A principal role for these committees was to try civilians accused of aiding the Confederacy. After Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus in September 1862, an estimated 15,000 civilians were detained in prisons while military committees decided whether they were guilty of treason. Many contemporaries accused the military

committees of being the means through which Lincoln violated constitutional rights. Staunch Union supporters, in contrast, applauded these makeshift courts as vital to national security.⁶¹ Controversy aside, in 1864, Governor Brough awarded Henry Mack the honorary commission of colonel for his dedicated service on the committee.⁶²

Mack's support of religious education has already been described in regard to his efforts on behalf of the Talmud Yelodim Institute, Zion College, and Hebrew Union College. His interest in public education translated into fourteen years on the Cincinnati Board of Education (1863–69, 1871–77, and 1887–89).⁶³ The experience gained with the building of the Lodge Street Synagogue and the Plum Street Temple helped him to chair the building committee of Cincinnati's new Public Library, which opened in 1870.⁶⁴

Mack was a member in 1869 when the school board issued its famous ruling that discontinued the practice of reading the King James Bible in the Cincinnati schools. A group of Cincinnati citizens challenged the ruling, but the board's decision was upheld by the Ohio Supreme Court in 1873, in a case that gained much national attention. The case has been hailed as the first major victory for those favoring strict separation of church and state. The controversy over Bible-reading and its companion issue, prayer in the public schools, rages on today. Surprisingly, Henry Mack voted with the minority of the school board that favored Bible-reading. His vote opposed that of the board's other Jewish member, Edgar Johnson, and the opinions of most of Cincinnati's Jews.⁶⁵ His reasons for voting as he did are unknown. During his fourteen years on the board, he also served on such standing committees as buildings and repairs, funds and taxes, discipline, and German department.⁶⁶

In 1869, having already contributed to local politics, Henry Mack made his first bid at state politics by running for the Ohio Senate. He was defeated in his first outing but was successful when he ran for a second time in 1888, again on the Republican ticket. During his single term in the Senate, his duties included chairing the important Committee on Corporations.⁶⁷

In 1876, the Cincinnati Superior Court appointed Mack to the board of trustees of the Cincinnati and Southern Railroad. Also serving as trustee was Alonzo Taft, father of future President William Howard Taft.⁶⁸

The Mack Family in America

Henry Mack was well regarded for his generosity to others. For example, he more than once gave substantial sums of money to help his son-in-law Abraham Newburgh salvage his foundering cigar factory.⁶⁹ I. J. Benjamin was a Jewish traveler whose diary was filled with descriptions of Jewish communities across Europe and America. Two entries in the diary note that financial assistance from Henry Mack made Benjamin's prolonged stay in Cincinnati possible.⁷⁰

A major hurdle overcome by Mack on his road to success was prejudice. Anti-Semitism and xenophobia were undercurrents throughout American history. General Order No. 11 was one of the more blatant examples. The Dun and Company credit reports exemplify how American Jews were singled out, distinguished from their Gentile neighbors. In various entries, the Mack brothers are identified specifically as Jews though religion should have had no bearing on their credit rating.⁷¹ Entries on other Jewish merchants were often interspersed with stereotypic characterizations, such as shiftiness and cheapness.⁷²

German-Jewish immigrants owed much of their success to their ability to adapt their ways to their new homeland. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Reform movement, but other facets of their lives were also adapted. The focal points for male socializing in nineteenth-century America were the fraternal orders, such as the Masons. Finding themselves excluded from these Gentile social clubs, German Jews created the B'nai B'rith. Founded in the 1840s, B'nai B'rith lodges sprang up in every major Jewish community and imitated Masonry with its secret handshakes, passwords, insignia, and ceremonies.⁷³ The Cincinnati chapter was founded in 1849.⁷⁴ Mack played an active role in B'nai B'rith and served as District Grand Lodge president. He was also active in nondenominational fraternal orders, namely the Mount Carmel Lodge, Lafayette Lodge, Cincinnati Lodge, and Gibulum Grand Lodge.⁷⁵

Henry Mack resided in downtown Cincinnati for most of his adult life. But late in the nineteenth century, he and most of the other wealthy Jews of the Queen City flocked to the outskirts of town. During the 1880s, Henry and his wife moved to Moorman Avenue in Walnut Hills. Whereas Walnut Hills and Avondale were the suburbs

of choice for Jews in the 1880s, by the turn of the century, nearly all of the well-to-do "Israelites" had concentrated in Avondale.⁷⁶

Though Henry and his brother Abraham were the first of the Mack clan to immigrate to America, it was not long before other Macks followed, perhaps on the advice of Henry and Abraham. The success of several of the Macks elevated the family name to a prominent position in American Jewish history. Cousins Herman and Lewis Mack settled in Milwaukee during the 1840s and quickly established a successful dry-goods business. During the 1860s, Lewis served as president of Milwaukee's Board of Aldermen and as chairman of the County Board of Supervisors.⁷⁷ Another cousin, William Mack, joined Henry in Cincinnati during the 1850s. William's son Julian became renowned as a celebrated Zionist leader, a federal judge, and a personal advisor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁷⁸ Henry's son Alfred, later a judge of the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, graduated from Harvard Law School in 1883, becoming one of the first Jews to do so.⁷⁹ Julian and Alfred Mack were typical of the children of Cincinnati's German-Jewish settlers. Whereas the fathers succeeded through commerce, the sons often entered the professions.⁸⁰

Henry Mack was remarkable not only for his versatility but also for the success he had in each of his endeavors. He succeeded in the mercantile trade but also played a vital role in the advancement of his religion and his hometown into the modern world. His achievements were all the more impressive in that they were made in the face of nineteenth-century prejudices. Because Henry Mack was in many ways representative of the mid-nineteenth-century Jew, and because he often found himself at the hub of important events that affected his faith, his biography resembles a portrait of American Jewry in the nineteenth century and the age in which they lived.

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Notes

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3. *Ibid.*
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7. H. G. Reissner, "The German American Jews," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*, 10 (1965): 69-70; Stern-Taeubler, "Motivation of the German-Jewish Emigration," p. 253.
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16. Stix, "Louis Stix," pp. 312-313.
17. *Biographical Encyclopedia of Ohio*, loc. cit.; Stix, "Louis Stix," p. 314.
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19. *Biographical Encyclopedia of Ohio*, loc. cit.
20. Hamilton County Marriage Records, Microfilm Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society Library, Cleveland.
21. *Biographical Encyclopedia of Ohio*, loc. cit.
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