

“MOUNT ZION WHICH CANNOT BE REMOVED”: A STUDY OF WEEQUAHIC,
THE GENEALOGY OF COMMUNITY, AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM IN
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“Mount Zion Which Cannot Be Moved”: A Study of Weequahic, the Genealogy of
Community, and the Limits of Liberalism in Newark, New Jersey

By John Wesley Johnson, Jr.

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Professor Clement A. Price

This dissertation is the first historical treatment of Weequahic, a residential section in the city of Newark. This study is a structural analysis and social history of urban decline. In the early 20th century, Weequahic was a middle class residential neighborhood composed of homes designed according to suburban standards, yet the appeal of the community was its proximity to industry and commerce in Newark. From the 1930s through the early 1960s, Weequahic was a predominantly Jewish enclave, but by 1965 the community was transitioning to a majority Black neighborhood. Weequahic, like Newark, was subject to decline wrought by deindustrialization. The urban crisis in Newark began as early as the 1920s when Newark's business leaders diverted municipal funds to commercial enterprises at the expense of the needs of Newark's citizens. Post-World War II federal development policies exacerbated urban decline as federal dollars subsidized the expansion of the suburbs; the clearance of slums for the chief purpose of commercial development; and the construction of highways that connected airports, seaports, and Newark's Central Business District to suburbia. These structural changes occurred at the same time thousands of African Americans migrated to the urban North during the Second Great Migration. The combined impact of the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, as well as the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 accelerated the departure of whites from the city, and stripped from Newark the economic and institutional supports that buoyed generations of white ethnics. The uprisings of 1967 led to the swift egress of Newark remaining Jews to the suburbs, but Weequahic Jews began the trek to the suburbs as early as 1950. Newark's Black community emerged in a period of diminishing possibilities. While some members of the Jewish community labored with African Americans to halt neighborhood decline, Newark's civic leaders betrayed the community trust for personal monetary gain. The residents of Weequahic, and indeed Black residents of Newark, bore the cost of this collusion. Mount Zion analyzes the impact of federal housing and highway policy on the Weequahic section of Newark through an analysis of federal legislation, the oral histories of Weequahic residents, United States Census data, real estate advertisements, and the literary works of authors from Newark.

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Introduction

A DIFFERENT NEWARK STORY Blacks, Jews, and Remembering Community

All told, the section has had four distinct lives: Farm English, suburban German-Irish, urban Jewish and now black.
-Jean Rae¹

The Weequahic section of Newark. The name may be hard to pronounce for those who have never heard it uttered in its two-syllable pronunciation – Week-WAY- or its three-syllable enunciation- Wee-kway-Hic. For a generation of Jewish Americans who called it home, the name engenders nostalgia and sentimental memories of halcyon days. Weequahic, Newark’s southernmost community, is a residential enclave that in the 1940s and 50s was a bulwark and gateway for upwardly mobile Jews. Newark was an ethnic city, and Weequahic was in every way a Jewish community, so much so that the Weequahic High School fight song reflected the idiosyncrasies of the Jewish diet: “Ikey, Mikey, Jakey, Sam We’re the boys that eat no ham, We play baseball, we play soccer, We keep matzos in our lockers Aye, Yiye, Yiye, Yiye Weequahic High!”² This is a storied community, all the more so because one of America’s most productive and iconic authors was born and raised there. Weequahic is as much a character in Philip Roth’s writings as his self-conscious or self-indulgent characters.

Weequahic occupies a special place in the Jewish memory. The documentary *Heart of Stone* tells the past and present story of Weequahic High School, the home of the orange and brown. The Indians. The film tells the story of two Weequahics: the

¹ Jean Rae Turner, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, June 26, 1977.

² Debrea Rubin, “Seniors recall their school years in Jewish Newark,” *New Jersey Jewish News*, September 27, 2010, www.njjewishnews.com/article/middlesex/seniors-recall-their-school-years-in-jewish-newark# (accessed November 1, 2013)

prosperous and safe Jewish Weequahic of the 1950s, and the deprived and dangerous predominantly African American Weequahic of today. It tells the contemporary struggles of students at the Newark high school that at one time was the most revered secondary education institution in the country. *Heart of Stone* documents the ways current and former “Indians” surmount the problems facing inner-city students: the noble efforts of the Weequahic High School Alumni Association and their campaign to raise funds to provide scholarships to Weequahic graduates; faculty-led mediation sessions to equip students with the tools to deescalate hostilities; and former principal Frank Stone cultivating responsible leaders through his relationships with three students that are members of gangs. The force of the story is the juxtaposition of Jewish memories of Weequahic with the present circumstances of students living in the predominantly African American community. The watershed between predominantly Jewish Weequahic and predominantly Black Weequahic is the 1967 uprising. In the documentary, the Jews left because of the Newark Riots, and the neighborhood fell from grace because the Jews left.

Did Jews leave Weequahic solely because of the riots? A Jewish interviewee commenting on Weequahic’s social environment said, “In Weequahic no one saw race.” If no one saw race, then what other factors were seen, and how did the residents of Weequahic respond? This dissertation will examine the Weequahic section of Newark in order determine the reasons why middle class residential communities outside the Central Ward of Newark changed in the post-World War II period. A study of Weequahic enables us to better understand the ways liberal policies underprivileged urban residential communities while privileging suburban neighborhoods. It also enables us to comprehend

the changing relationship between Blacks and Jews in Newark and how race and class are continuously redefined during the period of urban decentralization and renewal.

Colloquial discussions about Weequahic during its period of Jewish predominance are peppered with references to the Jewish community, whereas discussion about the period of demographic transition and African American predominance do not use terms like community, but more evocative ones like slum. However, the necessary characteristics for communal homogeneity like “common history, social identity, or sense of attachment to place,” often ignore the shifting terrain within a place and how people define and redefine the borders of a space over time. Steven Gregory, in his analysis of community development in African American neighborhoods in Queens, New York, submits that, “Often the idea of community has been used in ways that exaggerate the commonalities of the people it names and understate the heterogeneity of the institutional and social relations that they sustain through time and space.”³ For Gregory, “community describes not a static, place-based social collective but a power-laden field of social relations whose meanings, structures, and frontiers are continually produced, contested, and reworked in relation to a complex range of sociopolitical attachments and antagonisms.” Viewed this way, ethnic succession in Weequahic has to be re-considered. Documenting the transfiguration of Weequahic requires delving into memories of place that are both divergent and convergent. Testaments of congenial Weequahic are abundant, but stories of conflict are not. To be clear, disputes over the community were not just between Blacks and Jews, but also amongst Jews.

³ Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 11.

In order to better analyze these varied interests within Newark and Weequahic, I will draw from Gerald Suttles' approach to urban analysis that he calls the defended neighborhood. This method of evaluation operates on two levels. The first considers the "physical structure of the city; the location of its facilities, residential groups, transportation, and communication lines; and its specialized activities."⁴ The second analytical approach considers the way residents not only describe their environment, but "the way they think it ought to be like."⁵ Suttles identifies this method of reference as a *cognitive map*. Cognitive maps reflect the racial, ethnic, class, gender, age, and sexual partialities of each resident, and these predilections determine who is allowed entrance into particular spaces and who is barred. Suttles points out that the organization of any particular cognitive map may not necessarily reflect the structure of the built space.⁶ The desire to stay in Weequahic was a mix of devotion to a location- a love of place if I may—but it was also an investment of years and capital. This entailed ownership of not just a house, but also a community, and some Weequahic Jews doggedly defended their community. That begs the question: who or what was the threat? Blight was the convenient answer, but the term blight is about as precise as buckshot from a rifle. In some instances, it described the condition of buildings, in others it referenced inharmonious racial groups, and yet more, it described the condition of a group of people, and not people themselves.

⁴ Gerald D. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972), 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ Suttles says, "The discrepancy is often quite apparent when residents give very discrete boundaries for a neighborhood or area of usage despite there being no sharp disparities between such adjacent spaces. Similar departures are even more apparent when we compare the actual physical structure of the city with the structure its residents think it ought to have (22)."

This work is part of a growing body of scholarship on the city of Newark.⁷ Sherry Ortner's *New Jersey Dreaming* is an ethnographic study of the Weequahic High School Class of 1958. *Mount Zion Which Cannot Be Moved* builds on Ortner's work by providing historical context to the emergence of Weequahic as a middle class community. It is the first historical treatment of the Weequahic section. It does not place the 1967 uprisings at the center of the narrative. *Zion* finds the origins of the Newark urban crisis in the 1920s and 1930s.⁸ Recounting a comprehensive history of Weequahic requires telling both a political history that details the decisions of Newark's as well as New Jersey's bureaucracy, and a social history that explores the ways in which Black and Jewish Newarkers contested that authority.

At its core, *Zion* is a work of urban history and engages scholarship that details federal policies and their impact on the growth and decline of American cities.⁹ Kenneth Jackson provided the early interventions in the study of Weequahic as he examined federal mortgaging policies and their impact on Newark. Arnold Hirsch's "second

⁷ Sherry Ortner's ethnography on graduates of Weequahic High School, *New Jersey Dreaming: Culture, Capital, and the Class of '58* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2003); Jean Anyon's history of education in Newark, *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Education Reform* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997); Steve Golin's *The Newark Teachers Strike: Hopes On the Line* (New Brunswick, N.J.; London: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Kevin Mumford's *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Komozi Woodard's *Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); John T. Cunningham's *Newark* (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Society, 1988); Clement Alexander Price's *The Afro-American Community of Newark, 1917-1945: A Social History* (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1975); Mark Krasovic *The Struggle for Newark: Plotting Urban Crisis in Great Society* (PhD diss., Yale University, 2008); and Brad Tuttle's *How Newark Became Newark: the Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of an American City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

⁸ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). Paul Stellhorn's dissertation posits that the urban crisis in Newark began with the decline of Progressive authority and the ascendancy of private capital's authority in Newark. See Stellhorn "Depression and Decline: Newark, New Jersey 1929-1941" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1982).

⁹ The foremost work on urban history is Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Also see Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996);

ghetto” thesis grounds the discussion on postwar urban renewal’s impact on Newark, as well as Amanda Seligman’s question about the impact of the second ghetto on the urban private housing market in Weequahic.¹⁰ Local histories of neighborhood change provide insight into how to residents engaged and contested municipal, state, and federal authority.¹¹

Zion also grapples with the relationship between Blacks and Jews. As Clement Price has argued, “The conflict between the memories of two groups, which contributed to Newark’s importance as a city also embodies a fundamental struggle over the meaning of urban America.”¹² This work examines the ways in which Jews thought about African Americans as citizens and as neighbors, as well as the ways in which Weequahic Blacks perceived the changes to their neighborhoods.¹³

In the epigraph, Jean Rae described Weequahic as having four lives. This work will flesh out Rae’s description by chronicling the development of Weequahic from an English settler farmstead, to a German and Irish outlying neighborhood, and to a Jewish

¹⁰ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Yataka Sasaki applies the second ghetto thesis in his analysis of Newark in “But Not Next Door”: Housing Discrimination and the Emergence of the “Second Ghetto” in Newark, New Jersey, after World War II” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, No. 5 (1993-1994); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹¹ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), Wendell Pritchett *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹² Clement Price, “Blacks and Jews in the City of Opportunity: Newark, New Jersey, 1900-1967” (Paper presented at the Jewish Historical Society of Metrowest, Whippany, NJ, June 13, 1994).

¹³ See Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks: And What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.; London: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Hasia Diner *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Eric Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks Jews, and Post-Holocaust American* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

and then African American ghetto. Chapter One recalls major events and figures from the pre-colonial, colonial, and antebellum period. Monuments and street names throughout Weequahic have origins in this period, including the section name. More, Newark's growth as a center of commerce cannot be disentangled from the development of its agricultural hinterland as the collections of farms surrounding the budding city were integrated into the city. Chapter Two examines the growth of Weequahic from the late 19th into the early 20th century. It traces the emergence of the Weequahic Park Tract as a "suburban" destination within Newark. The neighborhood by the Park offered all the amenities of the suburbs with the added attraction of proximity to the core city. Chapter Three examines the early movement of Jews from Newark's old Third Ward community into Weequahic within the context of national hostility towards immigrants and their children. The growth of a middle class Jewish community in Weequahic was a response federal policy and local practices that were inimical to Jewish interests. In the early 1920s Jews bought residential and commercial properties in Weequahic, eventually opening the door for Beth Israel Hospital to move from the old Jewish Third Ward to a modern facility in Newark's premier neighborhood, thus opening the door for the emergence of Jewish Weequahic.

Chapter Four examines the development of Weequahic through the Great Depression. The federal government created a scientific measure to value residential communities in an attempt to offset the impact of the market crash by ensuring lending for home development. The Home Owners Loan Corporation security maps became housing industry standards and informed the ways American consumers not only valued residential communities, but also the ways they judged the people therein. As Jews

migrated south from the old Third Ward into Weequahic, African Americans migrated from the American South to the North, and settled in the old Jewish neighborhoods. The reading and misreading of people, culture, and neighborhood would have consequence for Blacks and Jews in Newark.

Chapter Five considers the impact of the first wave of public housing in Newark, by focusing on the ways Newark's business community undermined the progressive intentions of a liberal program, and examining how they seized power to further their own development interests. These interests required disinvestment in Newark services that benefitted city residents, thus initiating an increase in municipal taxes and the slow crumble of the city's infrastructure, including its schools and streets. More, the business community's practices buttressed racially discriminatory policies that sequestered Newark's growing African American population in the city's oldest homes and poorest schools. This trend would continue into the postwar period, and have terrible consequences for the Weequahic section.

The last two chapters examine the ways in which post-World War II decentralization underdeveloped Newark and undermined the stability of Weequahic. The 1950s were the time of rapid suburbanization, as new consumer driven lifestyle grew in the suburbs. This was also the high time of the Weequahic section that is often nostalgically remembered. Many Jews began the trek to the suburbs, while a number were determined to stay in Weequahic. And some of them wanted to create an interracial community. At the same time a growing number of African Americans, precluded from moving into the suburbs, attempted to lay claim to postwar prosperity in Weequahic, sometimes to the chagrin of Jews. Chapter Six examines the impact of the Housing Acts

of 1949 and 1954 on community development in Weequahic. Established on the premise of eliminating slums in Newark, the Housing Acts exacerbated Newark's housing shortage and undermined the stability economic stability of Newark's outlying communities, including Weequahic. More, unscrupulous landlords and realtors capitalized on a African Americans limited options

The first part of chapter seven analyzes the impact of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 on Weequahic. Highways became the arteries that connected urban centers to the growing suburb and expedited the flow of people and commerce across the metropolis, but they also cut swathes through urban communities. Federal highway plans included Interstate 78, a highway that runs from the Holland Tunnel and New York City to Eastern Pennsylvania. Interstate 78 could have been routed around Newark residential communities, but collusion between Newark's mayor and New Jersey officials thwarted efforts to divert the highway around Weequahic, leading to the destruction of whole communities. Before bulldozers began razing buildings, the highway proposal itself undermined the value of properties in Weequahic, and began a process of deterioration and abandonment that ruined a significant portion of Weequahic. The second part of the chapter details efforts of Newark citizens to counter economic decline in Weequahic with support from President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. Black and Jewish Weequahic residents, using capital from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), created a neighborhood board to develop programs to wage a War on Poverty in Weequahic. Members of the Newark Municipal Council, attempted to thwart popular participation in local redevelopment and place control of OEO funds in the hands of municipal officials. Efforts to seize control of Great Society programs eventually failed,

but help widen fissures between the remaining Jews and their Black neighbors. The urban crisis in Newark was combination federal statute and municipal collusion, all of which occurred before the 1967 Newark disturbances.

The title of this dissertation is taken is taken from Psalms 125:1.¹⁴ Psalm 125 is one of Israel's Songs of Degrees. These songs were Psalms that were purportedly sung by the ancient Israelites on their march towards Jerusalem to celebrate the Three Pilgrimage Festivals. One of those festivals was *Pesach*, or Passover. The fifteen songs of degrees were songs of hope, perseverance, and abiding faith, as the children of Israel held out hope for long held promises. In similar ways, African Americans and Jews made pilgrimage to Weequahic attempted to lay claim to those promises. This study will draw upon some of the popular memories to remember the community, but it is not an elegy for the old neighborhood.

Weequahic was a promised land that held out the possibility for Jews and blacks to achieve the American Dream. The actions of Weequahic blacks and Weequahic Jews signify both an abiding faith in the possibility of achieving that dream and the frustration over its curtailment.¹⁵ *Zion Which Cannot Be Removed* will ascertain the consequences of those acts.

¹⁴ Psalm 125 (NKJV) reads: “¹Those who trust in the LORD *Are* like Mount Zion, *Which* cannot be moved, *but* abides forever. ²As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this forth and forever. ³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest On the land allotted to the righteous, Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity. ⁴Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good, And to *those who are* upright in their hearts. ⁵As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, The LORD shall lead them away With the workers of iniquity. Peace *be* upon Israel!”

¹⁵ For a study of the racialized perceptions of the American Dream, see Jennifer L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

CHAPTER ONE

PASTORAL NEWARK English Weequahick

It is useful to consider the long history of the Weequahic section, which has its origins in the colonial period. The iconography of the section, including street names, the high school mascot, and the name of the park and section itself, has derivations that go back as far as the founding of Newark. Identifying these roots sheds light on the process by which a colonial settlement developed into a first rate suburban residence.

Weequahick was the name of a creek that ran through the territory of the Lenni Lenape, a conglomerate of Native American tribes that occupied New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Geological surveys revealed that before the last Ice Age, a powerful stream ran from the upper bank of the Passaic River near Short Hills through the southern edge of present-day Newark to what would be the Newark Bay. Those waters emptied into a lake before coursing down a small creek to the bay. Glacial movements during the Ice Age altered the geography, stemming the river's southerly flow, and redirecting the waters northeastward and then south again, until a new water way, today's Passaic River, emerged on what would be the northeastern border of the city, just before it linked up with the Hackensack River. Looking southward, there remained a little creek that ran from the lake to the sea.¹ The creek was a line of demarcation between two tribes of the Lenni Lenape Indians. The lands of the Raritans were south of the creek, and the

¹ Frank J. Urquhart, *A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey; Embracing Practically Two and a Half Centuries, 1666-1913* (New York; Chicago: The Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1913), 6.

Hackensacks dominated in the North. They called the creek Weequahick, which, in the dialect of the Lenni Lenape, translated into “the end or head of a creek or run.”²

On July 11, 1667, Robert Treat, along with an assemblage of settlers, met with ten representatives of the Lenni Lenape to sign a formal bill of sale. Treat, a Puritan, led a contingent of dissatisfied parishioners from Connecticut to establish a settlement by the Passaic River. Treat and the Puritans sought out a new commune to sustain their beliefs, free from the social and political incursions of the English monarchy, as well as the Church of England. The initial landing, however, did not get off to a smooth start. According to Robert Treat’s account, the Puritans were initially “warned off the Ground,” because the Lenape Indians at the site “seemed troubled and angry that,” the Puritans disembarked and began unloading their goods onto their land.³ Treat told the Lenape that he and the settlers “had the Governor’s order,” but the Lenape replied “that the land was theirs, and it was unpurchased.” Treat sought the help of Royal governors and eventually came to an agreement with the Lenape.

The Puritan leader and the Lenni Lenape agreed to an apportionment of land that included lands bound by the bay on the east, the “the great river Pesayak” in the north, the Weequahic creek along the southern borders, and the foot of a range of hills the Lenape called “Watchung,” which meant the “place of the mountain.”⁴ The land bounded by the “great river Pesayak” and the “great creek Weequahick” would eventually become

² Urquhart, 7.

³ Ibid., 54.

⁴ David Lawrence Pierson, *Narratives of Newark (in New Jersey) from the Days of Its Founding* (1917; reprint, Memphis, TN: General Books, 2010), 12.

Essex County, the conglomerate of towns and villages that would make up the greater Newark metropolitan area. A. D. F. Randolph's poem is a synopsis of the deal:

Just to themselves, to others they were true, The Indians at their hands no outrage knew; They took his lands and paid as they agreed. And had from him a primal title deed, For these fair lands, that from the river shore Break at the mountain; full many a score Of miles of wood and undulating plain. And valley low, by purchase did obtain.⁵

Randolph's poem intimates a just and reasonable deal occurred between the Puritans and the Lenape, but a second glance reveals that this deal was not all too different from the storied purchase of Manhattan by Peter Minuit, the Dutch Colonial Governor of New Amsterdam, who in 1626 purportedly purchased Manhattan from the Lenape in order to legitimize Dutch presence in the Americas. The Puritans signed their names, and the representatives of the Lenape used "Fantastical flourishes," with "which they indicated their mark."⁶ The Lenape conceded their dominance over land in exchange for the following goods:

Fifty double hands of [as much as two hands held together hold, undoubtedly] of [gun] powder, one hundred bars of lead, twenty axes, twenty coats, ten guns, twenty pistols, ten kettles, ten swords, four blankets, four barrels of beer, ten pair of breeches, fifty knives, twenty hoes, eight hundred and fifty fathoms of wampum, twenty ankers of liquor, or something equivalent, and ten troopers coats.⁷

The sum total of those goods was, according to assessments in 1913, equal to \$700, which "would not buy two inches of front near the corners of Broad and Market streets."⁸ In March of 1678, eleven years after the initial deal with Perro and the Lenape, Newark

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁷ Urquhart, 57.

⁸ Ibid., The estimate was calculated by Frank Urquhart.

also secured the lands of the Orange Mountains for the ripe price of two guns, three coats, and thirteen cans of rum.⁹ The New Milford Puritans secured a large swathe of land on which to establish their God-governed commune, but there remained unsettled business between the colonists of Newark on the Passaic and those of New Jersey's then seat of power, Elizabethtown.

Divident Hill

In 1668, settlers from Elizabethtown and Newark met to establish borders between their settlements so as to avoid controversies and disputes. Representatives of both towns met at Weequahic Creek, which in the years before English and Dutch colonization. On May 20, 1668, envoys from the neighboring settlements met on a knoll that abutted Weequahic Creek. Newark representatives led by Robert Treat, and Elizabethtown representatives led by John Ogden, determined that the ancient Native American border would be called Bound Creek, though the name Weequahic persisted. Thereupon the hill, Treat, Ogden, and their respective planters agreed to terms on the border separating Newark and Elizabethtown. An oak tree in the meeting place was marked to ceremoniously commemorate the agreement. To mark the establishment of those terms the letter E for Elizabethtown was etched onto south side of the oak tree, while N for Newark was marked on the north side. The location of that tree would be called Divident Hill. A neo-classical monument now stands upon the place where the tree once stood.

The agreement was not without compromise. There was a dispute between a border that ran “due west from the lower reaches of Weequahic creek,” and another line

⁹ Pierson, 13.

that ran “northwest to the Watchung mountains.”¹⁰ These lines formed a triangle that compromised a substantial amount of land. Treat and the Newarkers conceded the triangle of land in exchange for the “tract between the Hackensack and Passaic rivers.”¹¹ Seeking Providential sanctioning of the agreement, Robert Treat “with his right hand lifted heavenward, commanded the officials and witnesses to kneel for the benefit of prayer.”¹² According to a witness to the Divident Hill agreement, John Ogden, following Robert Treat’s invocation, “prayed among the people, and returned thanks for their loving agreement.”¹³

A month and a year later, June 24, 1667, the leading men of “Milford by the Pesayak River” signed their names to the Fundamental Agreement, a set of laws that regulated the behaviors of the Puritans. These laws were actually authored by Reverend Abraham Pierson in Branford, Connecticut in October of 1666.¹⁴ The Fundamental Agreements were crafted to retain the spotlessness of Puritan life. One law delineated, “That none shall be admitted freemen of free Burgesses within our town upon Passiack (sp) River, in the province of New Jersey,” unless they are were “planters” who were members of Congregational church.¹⁵ More, only Congregationalists could vote in local elections. For the Puritans, Old Testament scriptures were the “pillars, or foundation stones upon which... the last Puritan theocracy, or Kingdom of God on earth, was

¹⁰ Urquhart, 61.

¹¹ Ibid. See Figure 1.

¹² Pierson, 16.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Urquhart, 79.

¹⁵ Ibid., 66.

erected.”¹⁶ The theocracy on the Passaic was imagined as an insular village and the Branford decrees, and the subsequent additions to the Fundamental Agreements were aimed at maintaining that restrictiveness. A later addition to the Agreement held that any person that “disturb us in our Peace and Settlements,”¹⁷ would be notified to leave town at their earliest convenience. The unwelcomed person could sell their property in the settlement at prices deemed proper by “Indifferent Men”, or they could simply leave their holdings.¹⁸ This theocratic clause of the Fundamental Agreement indicated that there were clear distinctions between those who would be recognized as God-fearing townsfolk, and those who were not. Those who could not comport themselves to the Puritanical law would have to leave. Those forced to leave Milford were compensated. The Puritan’s attempted to form an administration independent from the larger colonial government headed by Carteret in Elizabethtown. Even more, they wanted to create an insular space free from adverse influences of the non-Christian, secular world. This would not prove easy, as Governor Carteret instituted provincial laws that made Puritanical law not inconsequential, but redundant, as “Puritanism was injected into every act placed upon the statute books.”¹⁹ More, the village of Newark emerged at what would become intersections of major road and water arteries that connected important centers of trade, namely New York and Philadelphia. To be sure, Elizabethtown and Perth Amboy developed into significant seaports and economic centers during the early 18th century,

¹⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹⁷ Pierson, 11.

¹⁸ Ibid. The law reads that any person that “disturbs us in our Peace and Settlements shall after due Notice given them from the Town, quietly depart the place Seasonably, the Town allowing them valuable Considerations for their Lands or Houses as Indifferent Men shall price them, or else leave them to make the best of them to any Man the Town shall approve of.”

¹⁹ Pierson, 14.

but Newark would eventually eclipse both cities as New Jersey's center of manufacturing and trade.

Colonial law made explicit the penalties for the breach of authority. The Governor met with deputies from established settlements in New Jersey, including Elizabethtown, Piscataway, and Woodbridge. Robert Treat and Samuel Swain represented Newark. Governor Carteret and the deputies established the parameters for behavior, set protocols for townspeople, and delineated punishments for violations. Males between age sixteen and sixty were required to "present themselves with arms,"²⁰ as a defense service that was not necessarily selective. Theft was punishable by branding on the hand for the first offense. A second offense could result in a punishment similar to God's punishment of Cain for his transgressions against Abel: branding of the forehead. The nighttime was not the right time for anything outside of the home because of a nine in the evening curfew. Indeed, "Night walking or reveling were misdemeanors of serious character."²¹ Further provisions governed interpersonal relations, as "No son, daughter, maid or servant could marry without the consent of his or her parents, masters or overseers."²² Marriage was very much a public ritual where wedding announcements were posted in the town square. Colonial law placed a premium on ensuring that there were not any strangers in the community.

There was a need to ensure that all souls within the precinct of Newark comported to the strict precepts of Congregationalism. Newark Puritans could not stop the travels of

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. The use of the term "servant", "masters", and "overseers" evokes images of slavery. Slavery in colonial Newark will be discussed on pages 11 through 13.

traders and other colonial travelers passing through the newly founded town. Historian of hotels Arturo Sandoval-Strausz submits that, “Colonial communities generally discouraged visits from strangers and kept watch on those who made their way into town.”²³ During the first two years of Newark’s colonial settlement, travelers in need of accommodations were quartered in the homes of townspeople.²⁴ These measures were taken because, according to Sandoval-Strausz, there was the belief “that outsiders might disturb the stability and order that were so much valued in colonial America and that most people consciously or subconsciously associated with fixed residence.”²⁵ The idea of rootlessness, or vagrancy, as a destabilizing influence undergirded colonial aversion to strangers in the midst. Subsumed in this “cultural insularity” was “the desire on the part of communities to avoid having to support outsiders.” According to Sandoval-Strausz, early colonial villages, as self-governing bodies, already had the charge of caring for members of their communities who, because of age, illness, or injury, were not able to care for themselves. Communities like Newark, “guarded their boundaries and policed their environs in order to prevent outsiders from becoming public charges.”²⁶ However, the housing of strangers in the settlers’ homes, according to Newark historian David Pierson, “proved unsatisfactory.”²⁷ In January 1668 the town established a new method of dealing with strangers. Taverns, or inns, during the colonial period were established as places to make unknown travelers known. Tavern keepers were tasked with providing

²³ Arturo Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotels: an American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 11.

²⁴ Pierson, 14.

²⁵ Sandoval-Strausz, 11.

²⁶ Sandoval-Strausz, 12.

²⁷ Pierson, 14.

shelter and security to visitors and their possessions. More, they had “to notify authorities of the arrival of any and all outsiders.”²⁸ Henry Lyons was appointed Newark’s “first keeper of ordinary or tavern.”²⁹

Henry Lyons’ reputation persisted beyond his lifetime. Lyons, one of the original settlers from the Connecticut colony and a signer of the Fundamental Agreements, was Newark’s tavern keeper for two years. After his tenure, he removed “southward and his place was known as Lyons Farms.”³⁰ Lyons’ successor as tavern keeper was Thomas Johnson. Johnson was also one of the original settlers of Newark from Connecticut. Lyons and Johnson were also given the responsibility of gathering “quit-rents”, or taxes, from the Newark settlers and tendering the town’s duties to Governor Carteret in Elizabeth Town. Johnson was the collector and Lyons was the treasurer. Newark’s earliest taxpayers went to Thomas Johnson’s home and paid their bi-annual tithe in “corn on the cob, shelled corn, wheat, pork, wood, pelts of wild animals; in fact, anything allowed in the way of exchange.”³¹

Commerce took off early. Some industries that flourished in late 17th century included candle making; copperage, or barrel making; shoemaking; and soap-making. The soil around colonial Newark was especially fertile and yielded Puritans’ copious amounts of fruits, especially apples. Pierson recounts that the apples:

Were very numerous on the mountain-side, and the blossoms as they appeared in the spring created a scene of marvelous beauty. The delicate fragrance of the flower-freighted air was detected from a distance by travelers.... Newark

²⁸ Sandoval-Strausz, 11.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Pierson, 14.

³¹ Ibid., 31.

plantation apples were readily disposed of in other colonies and large consignments were sent to the West Indies.³²

Pierson's recounting invokes a sensorial experience similar to the orange-blossom scented air of Spanish Seville. The reference to Newark as a plantation, for this writer, raises the question of slavery in colonial Newark. It points up to the burgeoning colonial economy of plantation agriculture; the proliferation of slavery; and the importance of Newark as a node of production in that economy.

Pierson acknowledges that slavery was practiced in the colony of New Jersey. Colonial provisions incentivized removal from the British Isles to the American colonies, and the accumulation of property through the ownership of bodies. Governor Carteret enticed free Englishmen to stake a claim in the colonies, and stipulated that free men would be given one hundred and fifty acres of land "and the same quantity for each able man servant and seventy-five acres for every weaker servant or slave carried with him or sent."³³ Hence, the more servants and slaves one owned, the more acreage received. The more hands working the land, the more monies colonial governors garnered in taxes, thus painting colonial settlement in New Jersey as one great big pyramid scheme. While slavery was part of New Jersey's social and economic structure, Pierson concludes that no such practices occurred in Robert Treat's Newark, as there was no record of slave importation along the Passaic. Pierson ascribes the spread of slavery to avarice, a sentiment not permitted in Puritanical Newark. "Fair dealing, thrift and economy were ever practiced." The community's welfare was more important than colonial exports, as "Producers were not permitted to send goods, raw or finished, out of town, till local needs

³² Ibid., 48.

³³ Ibid.

were satisfied.”³⁴ Pierson’s claim that chattel slavery was not practiced in Newark can be scrutinized.

Consider the Puritans law governing marriage. It may not comport with Pierson’s contention that there was no observation of slavery in Newark. Recall that: “No son, daughter, maid or servant could marry without the consent of his or her parents, masters or overseers.”³⁵ The law required that a “maid or servant” obtain the “consent of his or her ... masters or overseers.” The law makes explicit reference to relationships between masters and servants, and in that space servants owe absolute obeisance to their masters. In early colonial period there were few distinctions in the treatment of European indentured servants and African slaves. Only after the codification of slave laws in the late 17th century do racial distinctions between slaves and servants become salient. William H. Shaw, in his *History of Essex County, New Jersey*, cites evidence that confirms slavery was practiced in the lands acquired by Robert Treat and the settlers from Connecticut. According to Shaw, “The territory now included in Clinton was, while connected with Newark ... cursed with one foul blot,—the curse of slavery.”³⁶ Shaw stated, “the acres all about us were tilled by slave hands,” and, leaving no doubt as to the identity of these ill-fated souls, he describes these as “Human chattels” and “merchantable negroes,” who “toiled and sweat under our sun.” New Jersey was the last northern state to abolish slavery with the Act of 1820, which granted freedom to children of slaves born after July 4, 1804; enslaved males when they turned twenty-five; and

³⁴ Pierson, 48.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Henry Shaw, *History of Essex and Hudson Counties, New Jersey* (Philadelphia, PA: Everts & Peck, 1884), 698.

enslaved females when they turned twenty-one. This was a law of gradual emancipation that allowed for the use of enslaved Blacks in the Newark area as late as 1846.³⁷ Shaw described the “cupidity” of the masters’ response to the emancipation of enslaved Negroes in New Jersey, recounting the story of an avaricious slave owner that “tore from their mother two children, her boy and girl, and sent them to the Southern market. They were sold into perpetual bondage.” The mother of the children “reeled,” as “the wild scream of insanity cried to heaven against the crime of involuntary slavery.”

It’s important to remember the Newark’s colonial and pre-industrial period for two reasons. One reason is that revisiting colonial Newark unearths Weequahic’s pastoral past. Adriaen van der Donck, a Dutch cartographer, recounted that,

The mulberries, persimmons, wild cherries and crabs are better, sweeter than ours, and ripen earlier. Several kinds of plums, hazel nuts, black currants, gooseberries, blue Indian figs, strawberries, in abundance al over the country, blackberries and raspberries flourish.³⁸

This fruitfulness of Newark’s lands were abetted by annual fertilizing parties, or “bush burnings.” Henry Lyons chose the date for bush burning in Newark. Van der Donck commented that the annual affair “Presents a grand and sublime appearance,” that

facilitated the growth and new vegetation, enabled the hunter to track his game more readily, and by thinning out the woods and destroying the dry branches, caused him to move with greater celerity and with less fear of discovery by the animals he might be pursuing.³⁹

As the core of the city became more urbanized (not industrial, at least not at first.) the Essex county hinterlands remained a collection of farms and homesteads. The bucolic

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Pierson, 147.

³⁹ Ibid., 148.

aesthetic underscored the ways in which properties in southern Newark would develop as suburban space.

Second, we see the growth of Newark as a center within the larger space of antebellum New Jersey. The Puritan traditions were not able to abide untarnished as other groups of Christians, as well as more secular economies, established themselves within the confines of Newark. Even with the influx of social diversity early on in the history of the city, there was no distinction between the city as a space for dwelling and the city as a space for production. They were one and the same. However, changes in the economy and modes of production, as well as increases in population, altered the city space. Cities became the place of production whereas spaces outside the city become the place of dwelling. As Newark became more industrial, the workers that kept that engine running lived in or very near the places of production. Through the 18th and 19th centuries settlements became towns, and those towns were incorporated into cities. As cities consolidate into political entities, we begin to see networks of commerce and cultural exchange that connect city to the countryside.

Namesakes and the Proprietors of Lyons Farms

In 1696, the patriarch of the Lyons family, Henry, gave his son-in-law six acres. The acreage may have been part of the dowry for marriage to Henry's daughter, and said daughter may have taken her husband's last name. The Ward family would retain 306 acres of land over the course of the next century. The surrounding area would see a great number of small farmers and landowners. Two surnames that are frequently mentioned in the colonial and post- colonial history of the Lyon's Farm are the Meeker and Ward

families. While these families owned significant parcels of land, the name Lyons Farms remained the universal referent for the cluster of estates.

William Meeker was one of the original settlers from New Haven who settled in Elizabethtown in 1665. He, along with other settlers, revolted against taxation by the governors. Many settlers purchased their lands from the Lenape Indians and determined not to pay taxes, not because of the tax requested, but because they felt it was unfair. Meeker's estate was confiscated when England reclaimed authority from the Dutch. Meeker had friends at the Newark settlement, and owing to their loyalty to him, they presented him acreages at Lyons Farms. In 1676, Meeker's son built the family homestead on the corner of the Upper Road and what would be known as Pot Pie Lane.⁴⁰

In 1784, a stone schoolhouse was built at that same intersection. Pot Pie Lane ran westward up the hills of the Lyons Farms to Camptown, or what would become Irvington. As the story goes, the road was named for an occasion when local men decided to build a thoroughfare from the Upper Road to Camptown. While the men were working, the story holds that the womenfolk set about to making a feast for the hungry and work-weary men. When the men returned from their labors a table was set at the meeting of the two roads. "Copious draughts of the famous Newark 'cyder'"⁴¹ washed down the meal of chicken pie. Feeling very good, "filled to repletion, and at peace with all the world, it was unanimously decided, in honor of that wonderful pie, to name the new road 'Pot Pie Lane.'"⁴² The road to Camptown would bear the palatable name until

⁴⁰ Edward S. Rankin *The Running Brooks and other Sketches of Early Newark* (Somerville, NJ: The Unionist-Gazette, 1930), 55-56.

⁴¹ Ibid., 48.

⁴² Ibid., 49.

1834, the year all the Farms that made up Lyons Farms were incorporated into Clinton Township. Pot Pie Lane was redubbed Prospect Street. Clinton Township comprised a significant amount of land that included sections of what are now recognized as Elizabeth, Hillside, Irvington, Union, and Newark.⁴³ Newark incorporated as a city in 1836.

By the 1850s, Newark was a growing industrial center. The Lyons Farm, as part of the Clinton Township, was an agricultural hinterland where strawberries and other fruits were grown and shipped to New York City. The horticulturalist and merchant responsible for commerce in fresh produce was William Rankin Ward, Sr. William Ward was born to Doctor Isaac M. Ward on November 5, 1843 in Albany, New York. Dr. Ward was a noted horticulturalist and worked closely with John Wilson a respected horticulturalist in his own right, who in 1857 introduced the Wilson Albany Strawberry. Twelve years before Wilson debuted his prize-winning strawberries, Dr. Ward relocated to Lyons Farms and “began to the planting of fruit orchards and the cultivation of small fruits.”⁴⁴ His son would follow in the family business.

Dr. Ward’s son, William, received his early education in Newark. Dr. Ward then sent William to a prep school in New Haven, Connecticut, where he “fitted for College.”⁴⁵ William, however, did not further his studies. He returned to Lyons Farms and worked with his father in “horticultural pursuits.” William continued working in this field, receiving recognition and praise from his peers. He joined the New Jersey

⁴³ See Figure 1.

⁴⁴ Biographical Sketch of Dr. William Ward, Series V, Ward-Meeker Family Papers, ca.1749-1939, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Horticultural Society in 1878 and a year later was elected to the said group's executive committee on the strength of his expertise in orchard horticulture and commerce. His biggest recognition came in 1892 when he was chosen to represent New Jersey at the Worlds Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Ward's efforts for the Columbian Exposition were such that a colleague recognized his "energy, coupled with the ready response of producers in different portions of the State, made New Jersey's display a bright star in the constellation of numerous States and foreign nations."⁴⁶ So great were his efforts that it was speculated that he overextended himself in representing New Jersey at the Exposition, and cut his life short. Ward's colleagues regarded him as a selfless board member, recalling an occasion when he closed a committee report with the words "Let no man live for himself."

The breadth of Ward's accomplishments was significant. In his spare time he wrote essays on the subjects of agricultural commerce, as well as witty themes on light topics. In the aptly titled essay "Horses," Ward offered a glimpse of the utility of horse in the city and the country: "Horses are very useful animals and people couldn't get along very well without them-'specially truckmen and omnibus drivers, who don't seem grateful enough because they've got them." In the mid-1800's horse drawn omnibuses helped carry Newarkers to and fro through the city. This wasn't the most efficient means of transportation. Contrastingly, travel by horse was more conducive to travel on the open roads of the surrounding countryside. More, Ward was sensitive to the treatment of animals: "They are very convenient animals in the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

country in vacation time, and go very fast when the boys stick pins into them, a scene of cruelty that I don't encourage."⁴⁷

Another essay showed Ward's thoughts on gender roles in the institution of marriage and reveals the hierarchies of power in Victorian concepts of family and the home. It exposes the 19th century foundations of 20th century patriarchy. In an essay simply titled "Wives," Ward expounded on the virtues of not simply woman, but of a woman and her role in relation to the family. He articulated gender conventions in which a women's work is tied to the home. Ward's thoughts on the capacity and responsibilities of wives prefigured 20th century notions of middle-class domesticity and the role of women in the suburban home. He may have read Sarah Josepha Hale's *Godey's Lady's Book*, a book that proposed, "man's was the coarser sex," and the "only respectable occupation for adult females ... was that of wife and mother."⁴⁸ Ward set the tone of the entire essay, tying Divine order to the logic of marriage: "The richest love God bestowes to ~~upon~~ man is a good wife."⁴⁹ He found biblical justification in King Solomon's Proverbs. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing."⁵⁰ His essay praised the virtues of the woman who is a wife. A woman's power, in his estimation, rested in her ability to redeem a man who is "Care worn and heavy," from dealing with the outside world, presumably dealing with other

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49.

⁴⁹ William R. Ward "Wives," New Jersey Historical Society.

⁵⁰ Proverbs 18:22 (KJV).

men. This virtue is entwined with a woman's place in the home. Her place is not in the outside world, but in the home.

Ward, when describing a wife, painted a picture of an exceptional person. On the dark and dismal day "she brings a broad and steady stream of sunshine." More, the wife brought sunshine, "to guild the patriarchy and bright up the road of weary toiler." He conceded that men, or rather husbands, have a proclivity to the odious. Husbands, as owners of the home, were exposed to all those things that women, as custodians of the home, were not. As such, Ward claimed that wives could redress the evils of man's world. Matriarchy could gild patriarchy. Ward admitted that men place limits on women, but in doing so he underscored a gendered notion of work, asserting that men's work required skill sets that women did not have. He says, "Man has given to the world, most of its valuable inventions."⁵¹ He continued, "Woman has never been allowed competition, in many branches, which have revealed necessity for inventions." More he underlined this narrow view of women's work when he recounted wifely influence - what he called "the foundation laid by mother, or wife" - upon two American inventors. He cites the accomplishments of Samuel Morse, who helped invent the telegraph machine and Morse Code; and Luigi Galvani, an Italian scientist who made breakthroughs in the field of bioelectricity.

According to Ward, the influence of Lucretia Morse and Lucia Galeazzi Galvani on their husbands' work was based more on their roles as wives than on their contributions to science, says Ward. Luigi Galvani married his professor's daughter, Lucia, and worked closely with his father-in-law. Galvani assumed his

⁵¹ Ward, "Wives."

father-in-law's position at the university after the elder Galeazzi passed away, and subsequently conducted studies on electrical current and animal physiology. Ward states that Galvani's wife "was the real discoverer of Galvanism."⁵² Such hyperbole hints at irony. More ironic is Lucretia Morse's influence on her husband's inventiveness. Samuel Morse was an acclaimed painter of his generation. In 1825, he was commissioned to paint in New York when he received a letter from his father in New Haven, Connecticut. The letter stated that his wife was gravely ill from complications of childbirth. By the time he reached New Haven, his wife had departed this world and was buried. The distraught Morse was convinced that he would have seen his wife if he was informed in a more timely manner. Therein was inspiration for the telegraph machine. We don't see a woman's inventiveness in the tragedy of Lucretia Morse's death or Lucia Galeazzi's upbringing. What we see is their value as wives. These ideas of womanhood are the stuff of 19th century Victorianism, and prefigure the standards for wives in 20th century American suburbs.

Ward, when he was less ironic in his pronouncements about the actuality of a wife's capacities and privileges in 19th century, articulated roles that presage the separation of spheres, and conspicuous consumption that underlay 20th century American consumerism.⁵³ Ward contended that "When woman has been allowed to

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Historian Gail Bederman says, "Between 1820 and 1860, as increasing numbers of men had begun to earn comfortable livings as entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers, the middle class had begun to differentiate itself from other classes by stressing its gentility and respectability. Gender was central to this self-definition, as the middle class celebrated true women as pious, maternal guardians of virtue and domesticity." See Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11. For a discussion

show her inventive powers, as in her own home, she has there revealed far greater inventive of (faculties) than the man.” If man has the faculty to build the house, the “woman beautifies, furnishes & adorns & makes the home.” He adds that women have inventive powers as consumers, which is evident in the “manner she obtain’s the greenbacks & the demands made semiyearly to meet the madam’s latest styles.”⁵⁴ William Ward’s observations about wives are hardly progressive. Yet, he invokes St. Augustine’s ruminations on the origins of women in the book of Genesis that ostensibly portray men and women as equals.⁵⁵ On the surface St. Augustine’s axiom intones equality of status between the sexes, as woman is imagined, neither as man’s “slave” or his “master.” But in Ward’s framework a woman’s utility is a product of her value as a wife, with clearly defined roles that differentiates her from non-married women, and men. St. Augustine’s does not subvert hierarchy; he normalizes it.⁵⁶ This relationship is situated in the home.

on 20th century consumerism, see Lizabeth Cohen’s *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

⁵⁴ Ward “Wives”

⁵⁵ “If God had designed woman as man’s master, He would have taken her from his head; if as his slave, He would have taken her from his feet-; but as He designed her for his companion & equal, He took her from his side.” St. Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* as quoted by Williams Rankin Ward in his essay “Wives”. This is a quote from the epigraph of a chapter titled “Companionship in Marriage” in Samuel Smiles’ 19th century self-help manual *Character* (London: John Murray, 1876), 299-342.

⁵⁶ Ward’s sentiments reflect those of 19th century reformer Samuel Smiles: “Though companions and equals, yet, as regards the measure of their powers, they are unequal. Man is stronger, more muscular, and of rougher fibre; woman is more delicate, sensitive, and nervous. The one excels in power of brain, the other in qualities of heart; and though the head may rule, it is the heart that influences. Both are alike adapted for the respective functions they have to perform in life; and to attempt to impose woman’s work upon man would be quite as absurd as to attempt to impose man’s work upon woman. Men are sometimes womanlike, and women are sometimes manlike; but these are only exceptions which prove the rule.” *Character*, 1897. For a discussion of domesticity and the role of women in the home, see Jackson 47-52. For a discussion on the history of “separate spheres” see the Rosalind Rosenberg’s *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 1-27.

Taking Ward at his word, the husband and the wife share dominion over the home, each with their particular role: the husband as the provider for the home, and the wife as the caretaker. Marriage, in Ward's estimation, provides the possibility of for men to enter a holy and perfect place. He stated that, "When God drove Adam from paradise, he left him his greatest blessing & with it the possibility of forming another Eden."⁵⁷ Man was cast out from Eden, but within the institution of marriage, he has the opportunity to return to paradise. Ward, the horticulturalist, lived on his agricultural estate on Lyons Farms. He lived, literally, in a garden. For well-off families the outlying communities became Edenic gardens, or what Robert Fishman called a "bourgeois utopia".⁵⁸

During the latter half of the 19th century wealthy families moved from increasingly crowded cities to urban hinterlands. Some built impressive manors and others built quaint but stately cottages. They built them in wooded hills and established their own Edenic suburbs, away from the city.⁵⁹ The suburbanization of Lyons Farms and the remainder of Clinton Township would not occur till the end 19th century. By 1850, Newark was an incorporated city and a burgeoning industrial center, but it was becoming increasingly crowded and polluted. Those with the means to build homes in surrounding towns did. Other sought periodic reprieve from the Newark. The expansion of transportation lines between cities provided city residents a means to get out of the Newark and into to the country for, amongst a

⁵⁷ Ward "Wives."

⁵⁸ See Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

⁵⁹ For a discussion on the construction of early suburbs, see Delores Hayden's *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 45-70; Jackson, 54-61.

host of things, fresh air and leisure at the annual fair. The Waverly Fairs were grand events, but they signaled the slow end of the farmlands surrounding Newark as the residents and the boundaries of the city branched out.

The Waverly Fairs and Origins of Weequahic Park

Through the mid-1800s the collection of estates that made up Lyons Farms continued to produce fresh strawberries, apples, and other orchard fruits for sale in Newark and New York markets. The produce was shipped via boats that travelled on a creek that connected the lake on the Ward Farm to the Newark Bay. East of the Ward's family holdings was land owned by Obadiah Meeker.⁶⁰ The North Jersey Railroad Company laid the tracks for a trolley that allowed access to downtown businesses on Meeker's land. North Jersey Railroad built Waverly Yards Station as a depot for travellers. Newark also became the choice location for Newark's and even New York's upper crust to call home. Former New York City Mayor George Opdyke, who was instrumental in suppressing the Draft Riots of 1863, owned a summer home up in the Newark hinterlands.⁶¹

In 1855 the New Jersey Agricultural Society hosted the first of a series of fairs that would be held near the Waverly Station, and in 1866 the Society purchased seventy-nine acres adjacent to Lower Elizabethtown Road as a permanent site for the Waverly Fairs. In the early days of the burgeoning industrial center, pastoral Clinton Township became a nearby escape from the crowded and noxious city. The countryside was the

⁶⁰ Christine V. Baird "Neighborhood Snapshot: Waverly," *nj.com*, May 15, 2008. www.nj.com/newark/index.ssf/2008/04/neighborhood_snapshot_waverly.html (accessed May 1, 2013)

⁶¹ "Clinton Hill Came Back; Clinton Hill Left Us and Then Returned," *Newark Call*, March 29, 1936. (NJR)

ideal place for leisure and restoration. The fairs drew thousands of people to the Newark countryside for recreation and spectacle. There were horse and farm machine races, and produce contests for the biggest pumpkin and such. Over fifteen thousand persons attended a fair in September 1869. In September 1872, President Ulysses Grant attended the horse races at the fair ground racetrack. Grant, who enjoyed harness racing, was in Newark on the occasion of the 1872 Newark Industrial Exposition. At his reception, Grant told the attendees, “I am most happy to be here to night to witness this display of Newark manufactures.”⁶² He added, “This far-famed city of Newark has done well.”⁶³ According to the *Report and Catalogue of the First Exhibition of Newark Industries*, “The Chief Magistrate of the great Republic has done us the honor of reviewing the industries of New Jersey.” When Grant visited Waverly, he “inspected the products of the earth—the trophies of the plough.” Fair attendees were honored and thrilled by President Grant, as his presence was described as a “tribute” to “the triumphs of human skill and energy.”⁶⁴

The purpose of the exhibition was to show the excellence of Newark manufacturers. More than that, the Newark Industrial Exhibition was a showcase for the advantages of living in Newark. Touting the advantages of the city, the Expo Catalogue forecasted, “the time is not far distant when all the unoccupied land in the city’s limits will be covered with large factories and houses for workingmen.”⁶⁵ Is this an assertion

⁶² *Report and Catalogue of the First Exhibition of Newark Industries* (Newark: N.J.: Holbrook’s Steam Printery, 1882), 44. Under “Newark Industrial Exhibition, 1872”.
www.archive.org/details/reportcatalogueo00newaiala (accessed April 11, 2013)

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Exhibition of Newark Industries*.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

that industrial laborers will dwell in an expanding Newark landscape? The writer doubles down on the suitability of Newark, stating the city, "... possesses a double attraction for men of business: affording not only an excellent location for workshops and factories, but eligible sites for dwellings within easy reach of both manufactory and New York City."⁶⁶ He asserts that Newark could accommodate the needs and predilections of both the working and middle classes, and expansion of Newark through annexation was the key. "The rapid growth of the city during the past few years, has extended jurisdiction over new sections, and the rapid advances," northwestward "toward Bellville, Bloomfield, Orange," and southward toward, "Clinton must eventually result in their consolidation with Newark."⁶⁷ The accommodation of the strata of classes did not suggest class or ethnic integration.

The nascent Newark metropolitan area was ethnically and economically stratified. The 1860s and 1870s saw scores of immigrants from Western Europe enter the city in search of working opportunities. They settled in Newark's core districts including those in close proximity to industrial places of work. Indeed, Newark's industrial growth was driven by the grind of Irish and German laborers. Their labor drove the industrial machine, but they walked home through litter-strewn streets; lived in crowded tenements; and endured tubercular air, drank non-potable water, and suffered malaria, dysentery, diphtheria, and other diseases born of poor structural planning.⁶⁸ An 1890 census taken by the U.S. government reported that Newark's death rate of 27.4 per 1,000 persons

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁶⁸ For discussions on immigrants, health, and poverty in late 19th century Newark see Stuart Galishoff's *Newark, the Nation's Unhealthiest City, 1832-1895* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 1975), 87-116.

garnered the city the unbecoming distinction of “the nation’s unhealthiest city.”⁶⁹ With a population of 182,000, Newark was becoming an increasingly crowded and unhealthy place. Those with the means to move did so, and they were distinguished from those that remained not only by their economic status, but also because they were native-born. Racial hierarchy was woven together with the economic pecking order. Class, race, and culture were transposable referents. So were American, White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and middle-class. They defined normality and cast a pall of inferiority over races that were *not quite white*, and sought to distance themselves from the sons and daughters of Ireland, Italy, Greece, and other countries of Eastern and Southern Europe.⁷⁰ White Americans were “Fearful of being submerged in an alien sea.”⁷¹

The expansion of city borders provided middle-class Newarkers the means of escaping the deluge of immigrants settling in the core city. In 1869 Newark annexed part of the Clinton Township, which allowed for the development of Clinton Hill, the precursor of Weequahic, as a residential section of Newark.⁷² On July 1, 1875 the city of Newark issued bonds in the amount of \$400,000.⁷³ These Clinton Hill bonds were for twenty years at seven percent. Funds from the sale of these bonds were used to form a

⁶⁹ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁰ Whiteness studies provide a foray into the different ways class was defined and class privileges were protected during the late 19th and early 20th century. It shows how Jews were marginalized from other whites in Newark. For a discourse of class, disease, and ethnicity is explored in Matt Wray’s *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Wray’s text looks at Southern whites, but his analysis provides a framework to study how culture and class were read as determinants of health. Also see Roediger, 57-92. At the expense of stating the obvious, Blacks were not white.

⁷¹ Galishoff, 68.

⁷² See Figure 1.

⁷³ *Clinton Hill: Queen of the residential section of the city of Newark* (Newark, N.J.: Clinton Hill Association, 1913), Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives.

commission to map out the territories, form tracts, and improve the main roads, including Clinton Avenue. Horse drawn omnibus service was extended into the newly acquired territory, and more people settled on the newly laid plots. By the late 1880s, electric trolleys became a more efficient means of commuting to and from Newark's commercial and industrial center. In 1892, Newark annexed another portion of Clinton Township to the border of Irvington. The farmland and the mansions thereupon were "transformed and sold as city lots to thousands of homeseekers."⁷⁴ More transit lines were added to accommodate the increasing number of city residents. With the increase in population came the expansion of school facilities and public safety institutions. While suburbanization took over the farms of the shrinking Lyons Farms and Clinton Township, the Waverly Fairs experience a slow decline. The Agricultural Society continued to host the Fairs until 1899. The addition of diving horses and hot air balloon parachutists could not prevent the declines in attendance.

Newark's Mayor entreated assistance from other groups to subsidize residential developments in outside of Newark's industrial core. The newly formed Essex County Park Commission was founded in order to preserve open space in a rapidly urbanizing metropolis. Branch Brook Park on Newark's north side added luster to the city's Forest Hills and Roseville Sections, as well the neighboring Bellville. Newark's mayor implored the Park Commission to consider the Waverly Fair site. After costs were negotiated, the Agricultural Society sold the fair grounds to the Essex County Park Commission. John Charles Olmstead, of the Olmstead Brothers that designed Manhattan's Central Park, completed the design of Weequahic Park in 1901. Over the next fifteen years the park

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

would remain a draw to sports enthusiasts. The horse races remained a popular attraction.⁷⁵ Park attendees served volleys on the free tennis courts and teed off on a public nine-hole golf course, one of the earliest public courses in the county.⁷⁶ The lake, the largest in Essex County, provided an idyllic location for fishing, as well as a popular location for a romantic canoe ride.⁷⁷ The development of Weequahic Park was part of a larger movement of municipal consolidation in and around Newark.

⁷⁵ Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs. "Weequahic Park Historical Profile." Essex County Parks. www.essex-countynj.org/p/index.php?section=parks/sites/we. (accessed on May 5, 2013)

⁷⁶ "Weequahic: Second of a series of articles on the various sections of Newark," *The Realtor*, December 1958. Newark Wards and Sections Collection. Newark Public Library, Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

REMODELING URBAN BORDERLANDS A New Urbanism on the Periphery of Newark

This chapter will look at the emergence of middle-class communities in the southern districts of Newark, and examine the emergence of the Weequahic Park Tract as a model semi-suburb within the confines of an industrial city. In the 1870s wealthy Newarkers moved away from Newark's older residences near the Newark's growing industrial center, headed upland into the Newark countryside.¹ In the north, affluent businessmen built homes in what would become Forest Hill and Roseville. In Southern Newark, Frank Bock, a politically powerful Newarker, was the proprietor of the Weequahic Park Tract. Bock's vision for Weequahic followed patterns of early suburbanization in other cities, as families sought accommodations outside of older and crowded central city neighborhoods. Decentralization followed railroad and trolley distributaries out of the city and into the not fully developed countryside of Newark. The development of residential communities beyond Newark's industrial core signified the "social stratification" inherent in the ecological distribution of people and wealth across Newark. Clinton Hill, and then Weequahic, was developed as a community that held the charm of a distant pastoral suburb with the conveniences of proximity to the city. More, they were tabbed as restricted residential spaces absent the class heterogeneity of the city. Weequahic's value was in its class restriction that made it an unsullied space. Jews, despite national and local prejudices against recent immigrants, were not barred from moving into Weequahic. Indeed, their comportment as consumers was little different

¹ See Samuel H. Popper "Newark, N.J., 1870-1910: Chapters in the Evolution of an American Metropolis" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1952), 171-172.

from their fellow middle-class Gentiles, and these acts of appropriation allowed them to enter and make a community in Weequahic.

Queen of the Home Sections

The Weequahic section emerged from the Newark's few successful attempts at annexation. American cities attempted to increase their holdings and tax base by annexing surrounding townships. Cities like Philadelphia and Chicago successfully increased their borders. In 1900 Newark Mayor James Seymour spoke of his desire to see his city grow. Seymour stated, "East Orange, Vailsburg, Harrison, Kearny, and Belleville would be desirable acquisitions." He asserted that, "By an exercise of discretion we can enlarge the city from decade to decade without unnecessarily taxing the property within our limits, which has already paid the cost of public improvements."² Newark had acquired part of Clinton Township in 1969, which led to the emergence and growth of Clinton Hill. The developments in Clinton Hill portended the realization of Mayor Seymour's ambitions for Newark as an expansive metropolis. Newark, however, would only annex two more adjoining suburbs. In 1905, the city acquired Vailsburg, a residential enclave that was part of South Orange on Newark's western fringe. Three years earlier, in 1902, the city acquired the rest of Clinton Township, which would eventually become the Weequahic Park Tract.³ In order to recount the history of Weequahic it is important to delve into the history of Clinton Hill.

² Jackson, 277.

³ Vinessa Erminio, "Neighborhood Snapshot: Vailsburg," *nj.com*, May 16, 2008. www.nj.com/newark/index.ssf/2007/11/neighborhood_snapshot_vailsbur.html (accessed January 3, 2013)

The history of the Clinton Hill residential section is detailed in the brochure *Clinton Hill the Queen of the home sections of Newark*.⁴ The Clinton Hill Improvement Association (CHIA) published the brochure in 1913 and detailed the history and developments in the newly annexed properties. The booklet highlighted the history of Newark's two newest residential units: Clinton Hill and Weequahic. The brochure featured advertisements for banks, furniture stores, and other retail establishments. Pictures of stately homes, majestic school buildings, and august houses of worship gave readers a preview of the benefits of living in Clinton Hill and Weequahic. It also included a treatise on the Newark seaport that expounded on the importance of Newark as an industrial and commercial center in the Northeast United States. It was a catalogue of discriminating tastes, but it was also an exposition on the melding of urban economic development and middle-class living in Newark.

The houses featured in *Clinton Hill* were impressive single-family, multi-roomed homes. The Clinton Hill Improvement Association sought families of high means to reside in the community. The homes were large and were, to a degree, ostentatious. Indeed, the homes were the opposite of the flat-roofed, multi-family tenements of Newark's older communities like the Third Ward, where there was no distance between the entrance way and the street. According to one of the authors Theodore S. Fettingner, there was "the desire of the people to get out of the city," and into a community like Clinton Hill, "where there was good air, where the summers were delightful, where there was room to breathe, where there were trees, and where they could have flowers and all

⁴ Theodore Fettingner et. al., *Clinton Hill: Queen of the Residential Section of the City of Newark* (Newark, N.J.: Clinton Hill Improvement Association, 1913).

that goes with delightful semi-suburban life.”⁵ Space referred not only to the distance between homes, but also space within the home. The commodious single-family homes, some of which were built with dumbwaiters, were built for Newark’s well heeled. CHIA presented clear expectations that the Queen residential section was reserved for the middle class.

Theodore Fettinger was born to German parents in the waning months of the Civil War. Theodore’s father was a prominent merchant in Altoona, Pennsylvania.⁶ He worked in his father’s business and then Pennsylvania Railroad Company before migrating to Newark. His penchant for writing led him to newspaper writing, which eventually opened drew him to the advertising industry. Fettinger began working for W. V. Snyder and Company as an advertising manager. He eventually became an advertising executive for Newark’s grand clothier Hahne and Company, yet his expertise was not limited clothes marketing. A public figure, Fettinger was also a member of the Newark Board of Trade, director of the Broad and Market National Bank, as well as Hahne Building and Loan Association, a secretary of the United Merchants’ Realty Company, and would eventually become president of the Newark Tax Board.⁷ Fettinger was steeped in real estate expertise, but also skillful marketing and sales. This made him the uniquely suited to promoting Clinton Hill. His coauthor and fellow Newarker, F.F. Meyer, Jr, was president of the Newark branch of the State Republican League of New Jersey and

⁵ Fettinger et al., 3.

⁶ Frank J. Urquhart, *A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey Vol. 3* (Newark, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1913), 39-40.

⁷ Ibid. “An Enlightened Public Official,” *The Single Tax Review*, Vol. 21, No. 5, September –October 1921, 134-135.

National Executive Committeeman of the Republican Party.⁸ These men of influence were members of the Clinton Hill Improvement Association.

CHIA, in addition to illustrating the economic status of Clinton Hill and subsequently Weequahic, portrayed the ethnoracial state of their residents. *Clinton Hill* showcased five churches: the German Evangelical Lutheran; the First Methodist Protestant; Central Presbyterian; St. Andrew's Episcopal; and Blessed Sacrament. The five houses of worship signify the preponderance of mostly Protestant and Catholic parishioners as residents in Clinton Hill and Weequahic, many of whom were German and Irish. The Newark's Presbyterian Church "nationalities" map suggests that the majority population in Newark's southern districts were German.⁹ A former Weequahic resident recalled, "The original houses were purchased by German and Irish Protestants and Roman Catholics."¹⁰ The absence of synagogues in Clinton Hill and Weequahic signifies that there was no significant Jewish presence beyond the old Third Ward. Jews, as well as African Americans, had not made substantial incursions into Newark's semi-suburban districts. It is not clear if legal restrictions like restrictive covenants were used to discourage Jewish and African American entrance into Newark's southern districts.

In the pre World War II period, restrictive covenants were used to preserve the racial composition of neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants were clauses written into property deeds that stipulated who could or could not own a property. Clement Vose

⁸ *Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey 124th Session* (Trenton, New Jersey: T.F. Fitzgerald, 1900), 165; *The History of the National Republican League of the United States: With Portraits and Sketches of Representative Men of the Republican Party*, ed. John Francis Hogan (Detroit, MI: John Francis Hogan, 1898), 352-353.

⁹ See Figure 3.1, "A Map of Newark with Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate."

¹⁰ Jean Rae Turner "Weequahic—A Tale of Four Lives," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1977.

described them as “devices which aimed at limiting the sale or renting of property.”¹¹ Restrictions could be applied by the individual property owner or by development companies holding tracts of land. It is not clear whether members of the Clinton Hill Improvement Association utilized restrictive covenants to bar groups, particularly Jews and Blacks, from Newark’s more affluent communities. There were prejudices and checks against inharmonious racial groups. However, the almost absolute presence of Irish and Germans households in Newark’s southern districts in the first two decades of the 20th century was mostly the result of the preponderance of German and Irish immigrants in early days Newark’s industrial age.¹² Samuel Popper, in his history of early industrial Newark, explains that Germans, in particular, adapted well to their new environs in Newark because they brought with them many of the skills necessary for industrial trades.¹³ Newark’s first wave of immigrants were the pioneers of modern living in Newark’s southern hinterland.

Clinton Hill was more than a registry of homes, churches, schools, retailers, and financiers. It constructed a narrative of suburban development in Newark. Fettinger described the first residents of Clinton Hill as “early pioneers,” drawing parallels to the Puritans who settled Newark in 1666. The upcoming 250th anniversary of that occasion may not have been lost to Fettinger as the brochure was released in 1913. According to Fettinger, the Clinton Hill pioneers “suffered much from the inconveniences, the lack of street car facilities, the absence of sewers, the lack of schools and unpaved streets, and

¹¹ Clement E. Vose *Caucasians Only: The Supreme Court, the NAACP, and the Restrictive Covenants Cases* (Berkeley; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 7.

¹² For a discussion of immigrant communities in the early days of industrial Newark, see Thom McCabe’s *Miracle on High Street: the Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of St. Benedict’s Prep in Newark, N.J.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010)

¹³ Popper, 130-134.

the numerous other things that are invariably wanting in newly developed sections.”¹⁴

The inconveniences suffered by the early settlers of Clinton Hill hardly compared to those experienced by Robert Treat and the Puritans, and even those experienced by Newarkers in the core of the city, but Fettinger made plain the necessary components for the development of a modern community: sewers, schools, and paved streets, and street car facilities.

The early pioneers formed an organization in December of 1900. The organization that became the Clinton Hill Improvement Association was originally known as the Public Welfare Society of the Ninth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Wards. The name was changed to Clinton Hill Improvement Association in March 1902. The mouthful of a title reflected the tenor of the Progressive Movement, and their campaigns, to a very small degree, culled methods from Progressivism. CHIA was successful in garnering improvements to the community. These improvements included the paving and widening of Clinton Avenue; the planting of shade trees; the addition of schools, playgrounds, parks, and a police station; limits on the establishment of saloons in Clinton Hill; mosquito extermination; and bans on the use of dangerous fireworks during holidays. For instance, one of the expressed purposes of the organization was to “agitate for the establishing of a passenger station on the Pennsylvania R.R. spur at Clinton and Badger Avenues.” In order to justify the need for such a station, the organization showed that 228 residents of the 9th, 13th, and 14th Wards commuted to New York and could make use of such a transportation line. The extension of quick and efficient electric transit lines

¹⁴ Fettinger et al., 3.

was necessary for the expansion of suburban communities.¹⁵ CHIA also advocated for the elimination of safety hazards.

In 1905, CHIA joined with the Roseville Association and Newark's General Citizens' Association campaign for better trolley conditions in the city. CHIA had stake in this cause because of the planned grade crossing at Clinton and Badger Avenues in Clinton Hill. A year before, CHIA proffered a case against railroad companies in order "to indicate the awakening of public sentiment on the question of grade crossings and the realization of the menace that they were to life."¹⁶ In February 1903, a Delaware Lackawanna and Western train struck a trolley car that carried 120 passengers at a grade crossing on Clifton Avenue in the north side of Newark.¹⁷ Most of the passengers were students en route to Barringer High School. Nine persons died, including the trolley driver. According to Newark historians Jean-Rae Turner and Richard Koles, "the Pennsylvania and the Jersey Central Railroads had already begun a program to eliminate grade crossings in Newark, but the Lackawanna had delayed actions."¹⁸ Railroad authorities and industrial firms with holdings along the rail-line opposed CHIA's case. Newark's Board of Trade backed the case, but that support waned after, "vigorous opposition was evidenced by the railroad authorities, [and] a few manufacturers along the

¹⁵ Delores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 76.

¹⁶ Fettingier et al., 7.

¹⁷ "Trolley Trial Evidence; Progress of the Hearing in Manslaughter Case at Newark. Witnesses Who Could Find No Trace of Sand or Salt on North Jersey Tracks at the Scene of Tragedy," *New York Times*, September 2, 1903, 14.

¹⁸ Jean-Rae Turner and Richard Koles, *Newark, New Jersey* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2001), 69.

line of the railroad,” Fettinger reported.¹⁹ The aims of corporations did not always overlap with residential concerns, and they often did violence to the well-being of city folk.

Not all corporate incursion into the city was viewed as hostile. James Reilly, in his essay “Newark-A Seaport” contextualizes suburban development in southern Newark within the frame of economic developments in the city and the Newark metropolitan area. Reilly was the secretary of the Newark Board of Trade. He was a member of the New Jersey Ship Canal Commission and oversaw the major transformations at what would become Port Newark. In Reilly’s estimation Newark was on the cusp of becoming a major commercial and industrial center, and as such was the ideal place to live. He situated Newark as the financial and cultural heart of a great metropolis. In his essay he details the impressiveness of Newark’s industrial production and employ. Newark’s “industrial activity is represented by a total of over 5,900 manufacturing concerns, divided into more than 250 different lines of industry, employing an army of 76,000 skilled mechanics and citizens, whose labors produce a greater variety of finished products than the operators of any other city.”²⁰ Reilly articulated a vision of Newark as an industrial core at the center of an ever-expanding metropolis.

Using the 1910 Census, Reilly determined that Newark and the surrounding suburbs were growing at a rate greater than Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, and Baltimore.²¹ He estimated that over a thirty-year period, the population of Newark would

¹⁹ Fettinger et al., 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

²¹ Ibid., 31.

grow by 110 percent.²² The growth of the population in and around Newark would be stabilized by the growth of industry. Reilly observed that the city's manufacturing base would grow with local commerce in and around Newark, as retail sales in the city and suburbs grew at an astounding rate.²³ More, Reilly believed that Newark's growth as a residential community was due to the "relative freedom from serious labor troubles which so disastrously affect other industrial centers, where wealth has accumulated in the hands of a few to the loss of a large personal interest in the affairs of the municipality." Reilly's claim about the few labor troubles is relative in light of the 1910 fire at the Wolf Muslin Undergarment Company that claimed the lives of some twenty-six women, the youngest of whom was sixteen years of age.²⁴ But his statement, despite its fallibility, affirms a mutuality of interests: the proliferation of Newark's industry; and the expansion of suburban housing and consumerism within and around Newark. Reilly's essay makes a case for Newark as what Robert Self terms the *industrial garden*.²⁵ Reilly invokes the colonial founding of the city:

²² Ibid. Reilly said, "each passing year finds substantial gains are being made in the wholesale trade and, to the credit of local merchants, the claim can be made that the mercantile wants of the city and its suburban area within a radius of thirty miles are provided for in a way equal to the best and by establishments which will bear comparison with those of any city." He estimated the growth of comparable cities as follows: Philadelphia 66.19%; St. Louis, 65.6%; Boston, 68%; Baltimore, 57%; Newark, 109.7%.

²³ Ibid. Reilly stated, "Each passing year finds substantial gains are being made in the wholesale trade and, to the credit of local merchants, the claim can be made that the mercantile wants of the city and its suburban area within a radius of thirty miles are provided for in a way equal to the best and by establishments which will bear comparison with those of any city" (31).

²⁴ Peter Applebome, "Newark, Wresting a Fatal Factory Fire from Oblivion," *The New York Times*, February 23, 2011. Forthcoming dissertation from Rosie Jade Uyola.

²⁵ According to Self, the industrial garden is an urban-suburban model of city development in which, "Neighborhoods and factories, workers and managers, homes and highways were to coexist in a delicate balance that brought the machine (industry) into harmony with the garden (single-family home) (9)." Robert Self *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 9.

The natural formation of the city, rising from tide water in Newark Bay to the summit of the Orange Mountains in successive rolling terraces, lends to the city a charm which has been availed of in the laying out of the streets and avenues, all of which have an average width of sixty feet and are lined on either side with selected variety of trees. Its park areas include 641 1/3 acres within the city and a total of 3,147.78 in its immediate suburbs, which are included in the park system of the county, giving it a front rank in this respect.²⁶

He goes on to describe how rail and trolley facilities allow for efficient travel across the landscape of the Greater Newark area. To be sure, his primary thrust was the endorsement of Newark as a place to live.

Reilly expounded on the advantages of living in Newark. He detailed the expanse of city revenues and assets, including the newly acquired fresh water reservoir. But more than highlighting the structural and revenue based advantages of Newark, he listed the statistics of “merchants engaged in catering to the needs and wants of,” homeowners, “in all other lines of trade,”²⁷ which include “dry goods stores,” grocers,” “bakers,” and “department stores.” He also detailed the “professions” and institutions that were essential to the construction and growth of residential community. These included “architects,” “artists,” “dentists,” “lawyers,” “physicians,” and “brokers,” as well as “hospitals,” “social clubs,” and “newspapers.” Even more, he enumerated Newark’s houses of worship, accounting for the denomination of the 173 churches.²⁸ Reilly made a case for relocation into Newark’s suburban communities and for capital investment in the city’s business districts.

²⁶ Fettingier et al., 36.

²⁷ Ibid., 33.

²⁸ Ibid. According to Reilly, of the 173 churches in Newark, 32 were Presbyterian, 30 were Roman Catholic, 22 were Methodist, 26 were Baptist, 16 were Episcopal, 8 Lutheran, 8 Jewish, and 31 were listed as “miscellaneous” (33).

A July 1912 *New York Times* article reported on Newark's growth and verified Reilly's pronouncements to be accurate. The article situates downtown Newark, with its "bustling activity around the famous Broad and Market Street junction" as "a great radiating point to scores of well-populated suburban communities."²⁹ Developments in the Central Business District were described as "the evolution of the old into the modern Newark." Indeed, "One by one the low, old fashioned structures have been replaced by skyscraping office buildings."³⁰ As each old building was replaced, the property value increased. The value increases were described as "normal and natural, and it is conceded on all sides that they represent true value."³¹ The writer gave short shrift to purchase prices or cost analysis. He instead centered on how Newark real estate met the increasing need for professional workspace. One building manager stated that he did not have a problem renting out spaces in his new buildings. "Business conditions," he stated, "are expanding so rapidly that the best facilities and accommodations are of first importance."³² The writer cites statistics that posit Newark as a major node in the New York/ New Jersey Metropolitan Area, noting that 565,000 people lived in the Greater Newark Area; five major railroad lines passed through Newark; the existence of 12 passenger depots; 846 trips by passenger trains; twenty-three electric trolley lines between Newark and surrounding suburbs; and 3,838 daily trips.³³ Reilly's essay, juxtaposed with the other three, encouraged readers to consider Clinton Hill and

²⁹ "Rapid Growth in Newark's Business Centre Shown by Increase in Splendid Buildings," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1912.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Weequahic as places to live and central Newark as place to work. The annexation of Clinton Township, the growth of suburban-like residencies in Newark, the expansion of economic opportunities in Newark, and the development of Newark's parks followed the course of the City Beautiful Movement.

The City Beautiful Movement sought to build up urban spaces in America in order to address many of the problems in industrializing cities, including pollution, high rates of disease, and poverty. There existed the belief that proper urban design could ameliorate those problems. Frederick Law Olmsted believed in the necessity of city design. Olmsted anticipated the need of decentralization as American cities continued to industrialize. By the turn of the century, cities were overly crowded places, teeming with social ills as much as with people. Olmsted observed that

Families require to settle in certain localities in sufficient numbers to support those establishments which minister to their social and other wants, and yet are not willing to accept the condition of town-life which were formerly deemed imperative, and which, in the business quarters, are yet, perhaps, in some degree, imperative, but demand as much of the luxuries of free air, space and abundant vegetation as, without loss of town-privileges, they can be enabled to secure.³⁴

The Clinton Hill Improvement Association cast the emerging communities in southern Newark as spaces that melded “the conditions of town-life” with “the luxuries of free air and space.”³⁵ They portrayed a community that spoke to Reilly's claim that “The ideal city to live in is the ideal city to work in.”³⁶ Newark was that ideal city, and Clinton Hill was an iconic community. Theodore Fettingter was the fifth president of the Clinton Hill Improvement Association. The first president was Frank Joseph Bock. Bock was elected

³⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted as quoted by Albert Fein in *Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition* (New York: G. Braziller, 1972), 22.

³⁵ Fettingter et al., 35.

³⁶ Ibid.

to that position in 1900 and held the office for three years. Bock headed the organization that oversaw the development of the Weequahic Park Tract.

Bock was one of many businessmen who purchased and developed the annexed farmlands of the Clinton Township. He surveyed and charted Hawthorne Avenue, which at the time was the frontier for Clinton Hill and Newark. Other developers that made forays into Clinton Hill development included William and George Scheerer; Miller Roe; and Robert Osborne. While all of these men contributed to the growth of the community, it was Bock who enthusiastically persuaded the city to make significant investments in the infrastructure of Clinton Hill, including the extension of transportation lines up Clinton Avenue to 18th Street, and the installation of sewers, lights, and sidewalks.³⁷ By 1904, Bock had turned Clinton Hill into a prosperous community. “Where once were farms giving the city perhaps \$2,500 in taxes, there were now hundreds of homes, most of them of the one-family type, with ratables of tremendous value to the city.”³⁸ In 1902, Bock continued Newark’s suburban development into the newly acquired properties beyond Hawthorne Avenue after the city annexed the remaining plots of the Lyons Farms of Clinton Township.

Frank Bock and the Weequahic Park Tract

Frank Bock and a coterie of developers continued the development of the former Clinton Township. ““The Weequahic Tract,” the largest real estate operation on record in

³⁷ Description of the development of the Clinton Hill and Weequahic sections taken from the article “Clinton Hill Came Back; Clinton Hill Left Us and Then Returned,” *Newark Call*, March 29, 1936. NJR. Description of Frank Bock in Urquhart’s *A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey; Embracing Practically Two and a Half Centuries, 1666-1913* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1913), 412-413.

³⁸ “Clinton Hill Came Back.”

Newark,”³⁹ was initially thought a poor investment because the only way into the “sparsely settled country” was a road that was “flanked with deep gullies and steep banks.”⁴⁰ However the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey’s plan for a mainline connecting Newark to the city of Plainfield, which was 16-miles away, made the proposal for a residential community beyond Hawthorne Avenue tenable.⁴¹ The extension of rail transit allowed for faster and more efficient transfer of goods and people from New York to Newark, and destinations beyond. Bock and company bought the remaining homesteads in Clinton Township, many of which were owned by persons of note in New Jersey and New York, including John L. Quinn, Williams Goldsmith, W.V. Snyder, William Grumman, brew master Peter Ballantine, children’s storywriter Mary Mapes Dodge, and Waverly Fair prize winning farmers Patrick T. Quinn, and Obadiah Meeker. In fact, some of Weequahic’s streets would be named for these and other prominent men and women. Prospect Avenue, formerly known as Pot Pie Lane when Clinton Township was established, was renamed Chancellor Avenue in recognition of Oliver Spencer Halsted, former Chancellor of the state of New Jersey. Halsted’s home was located on the corner of Prospect Avenue and Summit Avenue. In what may be an interesting twist that illustrates the Supreme Courts’ granting of corporate personhood through the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, Lehigh Avenue may have been named for the Lehigh Valley Railroad, the railroad line that allowed for easy transport between Weequahic and Newark Penn Station. Corporate capital built transportation networks that

³⁹ Urquhart, 412.

⁴⁰ “Clinton Hill Came Back.”

⁴¹ Edward Hamm, Jr., *The Public Service Trolley Lines in New Jersey* (Polo, Illinois: Transportation Trails, 1991).

allowed for the development of Weequahic. In turn, the growth of the community benefitted transit companies as well.

Bock managed the Weequahic, Land and Development Company (WLDC), which went about buying land, portioning lots, and selling to home builders. Even more, Bock and company forewent municipal investments in Weequahic's infrastructure and installed sewers, paved streets, and sidewalks with their own capital. Even when initial home building was slow, WLDC financed the construction of ten houses, thus making the investment in Weequahic appealing to homebuilders, and setting the standard for future construction in the area. Weequahic's development did not occur in isolation. Its growth stemmed from its place in Newark, a major east coast industrial hub that historian John T. Cunningham described as "New Jersey's hub of finance, its center of commerce and the merging point of communications."⁴² Newark was a nexus where "Streetcars linked suburbs to the city and railways joined the city to the world."⁴³ Bock was a financier within a web of urban development and industrial growth.

This author has not found any evidence of land speculation on the part of Frank Bock or his associates. However, knowledge of Public Service Corporation's railroad proposal made landownership in the planned corridor an auspicious prospect. Historian Delores Hayden stated that owners of streetcar lines often bought land near planned routes. Bock was not a streetcar line owner, but the acquisition of properties along future trolley routes hints at insider knowledge. According to Hayden, "As street cars proved

⁴² John T. Cunningham, *Newark* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1988), 185.

⁴³ Ibid.

fast and profitable ... much wider areas were opened up to subdivision.”⁴⁴ Theodore Dreiser’s novel *The Financier* provides a fact-based fictional account of 19th century Philadelphia political economy. The novel follows the life and exploits of Frank Cowperwood and his immersion in stock holding, land acquisition, and profiteering.⁴⁵ Dreiser’s chronicle of a Frank from the City of Brotherly Love parallels the privileged beginnings of Frank from Newark.

Dreiser’s fictional Frank Algernon Cowperwood was the son of a successful banker. Following in his father’s footsteps, Cowperwood became an investor, but his ambitions went beyond speculation and gambling on the market. He did not want to be a broker or some minor player in the field. Reflective of the shifts in manliness discussed by historian Gail Bederman in *Manliness and Civilization*, Cowperwood believed that, “A man, a real man, must never be an agent, a tool, or a gambler – acting for himself or for others – he must employ such.”⁴⁶ In his estimation, “A real man – a financier – was never a tool. He used tools. He created. He led.” Cowperwood measured the organization of power in his Philadelphia. He concluded that, “There was a political ring ... in which the mayor, certain members of the council, the treasurer, the chief of police, the commissioner of public works, and others shared.”⁴⁷ Cowperwood was initially averse to such scheming, thinking “it rather shabby work at first,” but his trepidations abated

⁴⁴ Hayden, 76.

⁴⁵ Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier* Reprinted (1912; reprint, Huntington, MA: Seven Treasures Publications, 2008).

⁴⁶ In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman claimed that “by the end of the century, a discourse of manliness stressing self-mastery and restraint expressed and shaped middle-class identity” (12); Dreiser, 28.

⁴⁷ Dreiser, 39.

because “many men were rapidly getting rich and no one seemed to care.”⁴⁸ He recognized that the newspapers “were always talking about civic patriotism and pride but never a word about,” the avarice of said officials.⁴⁹ Bock, like the Cowperwood, was politically connected. Bock, according to Newark historian Frank Urquhart, was a Republican who served the party’s “interests to the best of his ability.” He was a member of Newark’s political ring.

Frank Joseph Bock was born on May 12, 1864, the son of August and the former Louise Bridto.⁵⁰ His father served as lieutenant in the Civil War and thereafter became an important capitalist in Newark. Bock completed his primary studies in Newark public schools. After graduation, he worked for the Peddie Company until 1889, when he began working in real estate. His field of expertise was “making a specialty of unimproved land holdings.”⁵¹ He became a “pioneer” in Newark real estate. According to Urquhart, Bock displayed “a wonderful genius in the handling and management of large real estate deals.”⁵² More, Bock was “honored by his” fellow Newarkers “for his sterling integrity and honorable business traits.”⁵³ Like the officials in Cowperwood’s political circle, Bock garnered respect and admiration for his work as first president of the Clinton Hill Improvement Association and as the draftsman of Hawthorne Avenue.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Urquhart, 412.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 413.

⁵³ Ibid.

Bock's resume reads like a political guidebook, a listing of auxiliaries with interests in land acquisition, property development, and municipal legislation. He was a member of the Newark Common Council from 1898 to 1905.⁵⁴ While on the Council, he served as one of two councilpersons for 13th Ward, and one of twenty-four persons on a Republican-dominant thirty-man city council.⁵⁵ In 1902, Bock served on three standing committees of the Common Council – Finance; Construction and Alteration; and City Home.⁵⁶ The first two committees would be of particular interest to a residential developer. From 1905 to 1908, Bock served on the Board of Street and Water Commissioners. He was also the secretary of the Republican County Committee for three years, and as a standing member for another three years. His work for the Republic Party was such that he must have come to the attention of the 27th president of the United States, William Howard Taft, who in 1912 appointed Bock "Postmaster at Newark, N.J."⁵⁷ As postmaster Bock "acquitted himself in a manner that has won for him the fullest approval of the public-at-large," Urquhart recounted.⁵⁸ As postmaster, Bock replaced the city former main post office branch—an old school building—with the substantially larger neo-classical structure presently located at 13 Federal Square. Bock was rooted in Newark's political infrastructure, and holding rank amongst Newark's officials gave him privileges and access that he undoubtedly used in the development of

⁵⁴ Urquhart, 413.

⁵⁵ *Reports of City Officers of Newark, N.J.* (Newark, N.J.: Groebe-McGovern Company Printers, 1902), 89. www.books.google.com/books?id=gFdNAAAAMAAJ&dq=Common+Council+of+Newark,+NJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s. (accessed on January 22, 2013)

⁵⁶ Finance committee considered the use of municipal funds. Construction and Alteration committee considered building codes and standards. City Home was responsible for care for the elderly.

⁵⁷ "F.J. Bock for Postmaster," *New York Times*, January 15, 1912.

⁵⁸ Urquhart, 413.

Weequahic. The plots for the Weequahic Park Tract were built at a nexus of commerce, manufacturing, and transportation. Bock's master plan for Weequahic reveals how the residential section suited multiple interests, including corporate and industrial enterprises.⁵⁹

Constructing Weequahic

Weequahic was an attractive location because of two factors: proximity to commercial and industrial firms of Newark and New York City; and contiguity to Weequahic Park. Proximity and contiguity were the selling points of the Weequahic Land and Development Company. A close look at the master plan for the Weequahic Park Tract highlights the juxtaposition of the industrial and the pastoral. In the lower left and right corners of the plan are sketches, respectively, of the Weston Electrical Instrument Company and a manufacturing site to be constructed. The master plan informs the onlooker that Weston Electrical was a "Five minute walk from our property."⁶⁰ The picture of the manufacture-in-construction is set between the Pennsylvania Railroad and Lehigh Valley Railroad Lines. Behind the smokestack we see the name of Newark's freshest community, informing the onlooker that this manufacturer was "One of many factories within easy reach of Weequahic Park Tract."⁶¹ The proximity of industrial firms to the residential section was a selling point for potential homebuyers who relied on factory work for their wages. To be sure, WLDC sought office workers, managers, and upper-middle class workers from Newark and New York business districts. The zoning

⁵⁹ See Figure 2.1.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

for two-family homes, and the promotion of Weequahic's proximity to industrial jobs indicates that Bock was, at minimum, amenable to residency and upward mobility for the working class. Also, it was pragmatic for Bock to advance the development of two family dwellings in Weequahic in order to capitalize on working class laborers seeking a home close to their place of work, but removed from the squalid flats in Newark's older industrial core. The liberality of Bock's willingness to accommodate working class residents was tempered by the rigidity of his vision for Weequahic. Lot sales to working-class families did not mean that the community would reflect a plebian aesthetic. Weequahic held the similar distinctions as other suburban enclaves because the guidelines of its development excluded objectionable influences that could reduce property values. Bock's zoning restrictions were similar to real estate practices imposed by realtors in other suburban developments. Bock and his cohorts, according to historian David Freund, modeled a "rationale for residential exclusion," that was predicated on disclaiming "incompatible land use."⁶² Bock required clear delineations between the residential, commercial, and industrial districts. No such boundaries existed in Newark's older Third Ward community, as the factories and stores were in close proximity to older multistoried tenements. Weequahic Park served as a natural buffer between the residential area and the industrial firms along Frelinghuysen Avenue. These restrictions predated Depression-era federal housing legislation, and would be foundational to the development of national housing standards.⁶³

⁶² David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 45.

⁶³ The 1936 Federal Housing Authority Underwriting Manual stipulated that the "if location lies in the middle of an area well developed with a uniform type of residential properties, and if the location is away from main arteries which would logically be used for business purposes, probability of change in type, use, or occupancy of properties at this location is remote." (229) More, "Natural or artificially established

While the Weequahic Park Tract was designed to accommodate both working and middle class families, Bock zoned the development with clear delineations between each demographic. All the lots abutting Elizabeth Avenue were priced at \$3,500.⁶⁴ He zoned these homes to be grand multi-roomed, one family homes. Lots east, or below, Hunterdon Street were sold at \$3,000. All lots west, or above, Hunterdon Street cost \$2,500. These lots were only 25 by 100 foot and 35 by 100 foot.⁶⁵ These lots were reserved for two-family homes, thus sequestering those more-than-likely working-class families to particular spaces in the Weequahic landscape. Hunterdon Street was a line of demarcation. The only lots designated for commercial operations were along Bergen Street, which was west and ran parallel to Hunterdon Street, thus placing Weequahic's retail and service markets within the designed space of working-class residences, not the posh middle and upper middle-class homes closest to the Park. Bergen Street was a dividing line, as homes below Bergen Street were the exclusive reserve of grand single-family homes. Properties above Bergen Street were mostly two-family houses. Saloons were not allowed in the section. The banning of bars from Weequahic may have arisen from the temperance movement.

Bock and his associates laid out specific guidelines for structural development in Weequahic. According to the master plan, only one house could be built on lot. All the homes had to be uniform distance from the street. Flat roofs were not allowed on any part

barrier will prove effective in protecting a neighborhood and the locations within it from adverse influences." The adverse influences included "the infiltration of business and industrial uses, lower-class occupancy, and inharmonious racial groups." "“Racial” Provisions of FHA Underwriting Manual, 1936” *Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuations Procedure Under Title II of the National Housing Act With Revisions to April 1, 1936* (Washington, D.C., Part II, Section 2). www.urbanoasis.org/projects/fha/FHAUnderwritingManualPtII.html#201 (accessed on April 22, 2013)

⁶⁴ See Figure 2.1.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

of a property. This applied to outhouses as well. Unlike the core communities of Newark, construction in Weequahic was orderly. WLDC required specific distances from the front door of a home to the street. There was no mix-use property in the residential area.

Weequahic combined the convenience of the city with the orderliness of the suburbs.

Weequahic was close to places of work, but it was a place of labor for shop-owners, stay at home mothers, and live-in servants. The orderly planning of Weequahic underscored the structural contrast to Newark's older core communities.

Weequahic comports to Hayden's assessment of a *picturesque enclave* and a *streetcar buildout*. The Weequahic Park Tract, because of its proximity to the Park, lent itself to what Hayden calls a picturesque enclave, a place where "Houses were sited amid heavy planting adjacent to shared parks and other common spaces so that they appeared to be wrapped in greenery."⁶⁶ According to Hayden, "Picturesque enclaves were the most important secular manifestation of a wider communitarian movement whose adherents believed that building a model community in a natural setting led to the reform of society." Bock and company believed that Weequahic could be such a place. An real estate ad in the *New York Press* described Weequahic as a "High grade property offered at terms which place it within the reach of any one who will save something each month."⁶⁷ WLDC casts Weequahic as a top rate, yet affordable alternative to living in the Newark's old Third Ward. Weequahic was also what Hayden termed a "streetcar buildout," which were communities that "began as linear real estate developments along

⁶⁶ Hayden, 45.

⁶⁷ "Advertisement," *The New York Press*, October 8, 1905. See Figure 2.2.

expanding transit lines.”⁶⁸ More, street buildouts were “adjacent to urban or suburban industries,” and properties were marketed to “many second-generation Americans, children of immigrants who had grown up in inner-city tenements.”⁶⁹ A close reading of WLDC’s advertisements reveals that the developers created images of Weequahic that show both models of suburban development.

Advertisements for the Weequahic Park Tract appeared in New York newspapers as early as 1905, three years after Newark annexed Clinton Township. Bock placed ads in New York rags like the *New York Times*, *the Sun*, *the New York Press*, and *the Brooklyn New York Eagle*. There were common themes that ran through each add: proximity to downtown Newark, New York, and Weequahic Park; and easy access via railroad or trolley lines. Some ads emphasized particular aspects of the Tract. In the conservative, locally focused *Sun* newspaper, Bock advised potential homebuyers “Money is made by looking ahead and discounting future developments,” in suburban developments like the Bronx.⁷⁰ Bock advised New Yorkers to consider an alternative location: “The recent enormous advance in values in The Bronx caused by the building of the subway in New York is an indication of what will take place in this section upon the completion of the North River Tunnels.”⁷¹ Bock pointed out that illogic of a nearly one-hour commute between the Bronx and downtown New York. He predicted that the eighteen-minute commute between Weequahic and New York, “will be the greatest factor imaginable in

⁶⁸ Hayden, 71.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Real Estate Ad,” *The New York Sun*, April 8, 1906. See Figure 2.3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

inducing busy New Yorkers to make their home here.”⁷² The ad features sketches of homes that are under construction and a scene from Weequahic Park. In this particular ad, convenience is the main selling point, but more than convenience Bock is mindful of business men’s increased fondness for exclusive residential communities. He describes Weequahic as, “High Class Property. Restricted to Insure Best Development.” The use of the term “restricted” was in keeping with norms of land developers who emphasized that residential communities would bar non-whites. It is not clear if Bock added restrictive covenants to the land titles, and if these restrictions were leveled at African Americans, Jews, or other inharmonious racial groups. As shall be seen, there were homeowners in Newark’s southern districts who refused to rent or sell property to Jews and Blacks.

What is clear is that in addition to its ideal location, WDLC stressed that Weequahic was aesthetically restricted. A June 1909 advertisement in *The New York Times* tabbed Weequahic “A handsome development that appeals to people of artistic temperament who want desirable, properly restricted, residential property.”⁷³ Proximity to New York is mentioned, but the value of Weequahic is the main thrust. “One of the most sightly (sp) locations in Newark. Restricted to insure development in keeping with its natural beauty.” Despite the pronouncements that made the Weequahic Park Tract an ostensibly open community, WLDC was clear in its intention to keep the Tract a restricted space, stating that “The vital importance of proper restrictions cannot be overestimated,” as “thousands of dollars,” were “spent for improvement of various kinds,” that would “keep adding to the values,” of this picturesque enclave in Newark. Bock and WLDC believed, “Proper restrictions make good neighborhoods.” The

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Advertisement,” *The New York Time*, June 20, 1909. See Figure 2.4.

improvements and construction restraints were assigned to maintain a specifically middle-class, Victorian comportment in the developing community. A residential space, “with beautiful lake only 500 feet distant,” and homes built on a “high and healthful location,” Weequahic was part of Newark, but it shared qualities with communities in the surrounding suburbs.⁷⁴

Frank Bock went about creating a distinctively urbane community. A June 1909 *New York Times* article reported on the progress of development in Weequahic. The writer reported a \$30,000 boulevarding investment where, “For almost a mile and a half on the new streets twelve-foot wide parks have been laid out in the middle of the thoroughfares.”⁷⁵ The outlay for the extra curbing and shrubbery to Weequahic streets were significant, but Bock speculated that his boulevard plan enhanced property values in Weequahic. The \$30,000 investment was part of the almost one million dollars the Weequahic Park Improvement Association spent on the community’s development. When asked about the improvements to the streets, Bock said, “We propose to make this one of the beauty spots of Newark, and the boulevarding (sp) idea which I have worked out will, I think, be pleasing.”⁷⁶ Bock detailed the steps for maintenance of the boulevard parks, confirming that they “will be kept in first-class condition all the year round.” He declared that “evergreens are to be planted,” and “flowers” and “lawns” maintained. Bock insisted that the WLDC’s improvements would “give the property an appearance similar to the residential sections in some of the other large cities in the New England

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Rapid Growth of Newark Suburb,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1909. To see boulevarded street, see Figure 2.9.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

section and the West.”⁷⁷ Bock’s vision of Weequahic was a community that reflected the aesthetics of the Anglican Northeast.

The homes of Weequahic were an assortment of Tudor Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Four Square, Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Neo-Classical homes. The early homes built along the featured thoroughfares of Elizabeth Avenue, Meeker Street, Renner Avenue, and Mapes Avenue were built according to one or more of these styles.⁷⁸ The residences built upon the wide and sloping lanes gave the streets a New England affectation that Bock imagined. A July 1909 real estate article in the *New York Times* described streets where stately homes were “situated for the most part on high terraced ground,” and gave “to the suburb as a whole an aristocratic appearance.”⁷⁹ The writer detailed the construction guidelines, as well as the strict residential and commercial zoning regulations. Weequahic was in the Newark cityscape, but it did not reflect the social and structural order of Newark’s older central communities. This distinction was reified by the absence of watering holes and speakeasies. The writer, recognizing that the desire to live in suburbs was implicitly tied to a desire for privacy and distance from encumbrances of public revelry, nonchalantly tenders that, “Incidentally there are no saloons.”⁸⁰ Affirming this point, an October 1909 article described the developments in Weequahic as “regulated along conservative lines,” where the neighborhood does not have “a uniform, hard-and-fast set of restrictions for the entire development but various

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Figures 2.5 – 2.13. “Weequahic Park Tract Real Estate Booklet (Turn Of the Century)” *Newark Street Old Newark Web Group* www.newarkstreets.com/photos/index.php?cat=52. (accessed on March 18, 2013)

⁷⁹ “Weequahic Park Tract Improvement,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1909, 9.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

provisions applying to different parts of the property.”⁸¹ Weequahic allowed for a range of architectural designs, but they had to fit within a particular scale of composition. Bock and company constructed a community within Newark that was listed in the *New York Times* as one of the “Attractive Residential Sites Around New York.”⁸² Weequahic, as community was categorized with suburban communities like Hastings-On-the Hudson, New York; Garden City and South Bay on Long Island; and Leonia, Tenafly, and Mountain Lakes in New Jersey.⁸³

It bears stating that Newarkers at one point in time viewed Weequahic as a suburb. While it was within the political boundaries of a city, the value of the homes and its proximity to Weequahic Park gave the residential development the aesthetic feel of a suburb. A former resident tabbed Weequahic during this period “suburban German-Irish.”⁸⁴ It was, however, part of the city. Weequahic’s appeal was that it was both urban and sub-urban.

Whereas newspapers cast a picture of life in Weequahic through language that appealed to the class-consciousness of homebuyers, potential residents of the new suburb did not necessarily have a portrait of Newark’s freshest residential community. Postcards conveyed to consumers the aesthetic qualities of locations they may have heard of but never visited. More than a medium for passing on “wish you were here’s” and “thinking of you’s”, picture postcards portrayed a vision of the destination captured. Crafted by German artists, the pictures on the postcards were photograph negatives of particular

⁸¹ “New Construction in Newark’s Suburbs,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1909.

⁸² “Attractive Residential Sites Around New York,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 1912. See Figure 2.14.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Jean Rae Turner, “Weequahic—A Tale of Four Lives,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1977.

locations. Elements within the picture, such as trees, shrubbery, power lines, and color were added or removed in order to portray an idyllic scene that was fixed in time.⁸⁵ The artists' embellishments and extractions are read for what they say about American imaginings.⁸⁶ More, a photographer encapsulates and excludes when framing a picture. The unseen objects that are outside the frame of a picture can reveal just as much about an artists construction of the city as what is included. Early 20th century postcards are "artifacts of the Progressive Era," that articulate a hoped for vision of the city and the suburb.⁸⁷

The Weequahic Park postcards, like Main Street postcards, depict scenes that lend "credibility to the potential for a transformed urban commercial order."⁸⁸ Each postcard bears a description of the scene in the photograph and locates the site of the photograph in Newark. This detail is significant in that it submits that there are bucolic spaces within the confines of industrial Newark. More precisely it constructs Weequahic Park, and ultimately the neighborhood as a space for suburban living and middle-class leisure within the city. Weequahic was a part of and apart from the city.

Take postcard "Corner of Weequahic Lake" (Figure 2.15). The image is of a man paddling in a canoe on Weequahic Lake. In the background are the tree-lined rolling hills of the Olmstead Brothers designed park. Farther back, three person are walking along the

⁸⁵ Allison Isenberg, in her analysis of downtown renewal, explains the utility of postcards: "In the early decades of the twentieth century, creating a new, beautiful vision of the American downtown through postcards and civic plans became an obsession of Main Street businesses, city leaders, and investors. Thus the "place" ... in the postcards was not a brick-and-mortar location but rather a territory within Americans' imaginations, a hopeful vision of urban commerce transformed." See Isenberg's *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People that Made It* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago, 2004), 43.

⁸⁶ Isenberg contextualizes "the cards within the conventions of their own genre" and suggests that the "alterations" to postcards are "subject to analysis instead of being seen as inaccuracies" (337).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

hills. And there is nothing else. The black and white photo is painted with whites and blues to show the lake reflecting the partially cloudy sky; greens to capture the verdant hills; and orange and yellows to distinguish birch from oak and maple trees. The image is of an isolated place. The photographer framed the pictured so as to isolate this one picturesque place from the larger space of Newark. This postcard catalyzes Weequahic Park as unsullied country, disentangled from industrialized Newark. Weequahic was cast as a healthy, lush, peaceful, and spacious locale in contrast to the cobble-stoned streets, teeming flats, and squalor of the industrial core city. Indeed, the absence of any development implies a sublimity that emanates from an unblemished countryside. The postcard “A Shady Nook” (Figure 2.16) underscores the idea of absence. The postcard “Pavilion Dividend Hill” (Figure 2.17) uses different imagery but deploys similar tropes of isolation to impart a distinct vision of Weequahic.

Weequahic Park was the site of commemorative events that marked the 250th anniversary of the city’s founding. A grand pageant was held along the lake. A platform was built and over seven thousand men, women, and children reenacted major events in the history of the Newark. The four-day event began on Memorial Day, May 30, 1916, and concluded on Friday, June 1. The Dividend Hill Monument, a more permanent commemorative to the city, was built in Weequahic Park along Upper Elizabeth Road. Carriere and Hastings were commissioned to build the monument in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Newark and to commemorate the meeting between Newark’s Puritans and the Elizabethtown settlers to establish the borders between the two colonial villages. The monument was built upon the place where there once stood a marked-oak tree that designated the starting point of the boundary between

Newark and Elizabeth. The postcard “Pavilion Dividend Hill” captures the monument in isolation. The white rotunda is in harmony with the greenery on the hill. The neo-classical architecture of the pavilion amidst the verdure growing along the hill reflects the designs of the City Beautiful Movement, a progressive movement of the early 20th century that advanced the idea that the beautification of the city would promote civic virtue and health in urban residence. This rendering of Dividend Hill is in isolation, and renders a vision of Newark and Weequahic devoid of malady. The postcard “Rose Garden, Weequahic Park” (Figure 2.18) similarly renders a picture of Newark and Weequahic that does not conjure any notion of the city or industry.

“Grove Along the Shore of the Lake” (Figure 2.19) differs from the previous postcards in that it focuses not on absence but integration. The photographer focuses on a path on which two females, possibly young girls, are talking. A closer look at the young girls reveals their attire is in keeping with middle class fashion. The verity of the girls’ place in the original photograph can be questioned, as well as the placements of the two canoes on the lake. Nonetheless, the fact of their isolation, or seclusion, on a path in Weequahic Park intimates security rather than peril. Young girls could traipse through the virgin woods in Weequahic Park in relative safety, partly because they are not really alone. The persons boating on Weequahic Lake are close at hand, and directly behind the girls, beyond the trees and on the other side of the lake is a boathouse. More importantly, the path that cuts through the shrubbery and wildflowers is well trod. The young ladies enjoy their sisterhood in safe solitude of the park even though they are really not alone. “Scene in Weequahic Park” (Figure 2.20) also integrates images to impart the idea of integration.

This particular postcard presents vivid colors to intone warmth and vitality. The image captures the boathouse on the eastern shore of Weequahic Lake, with the lake itself bereft of activity and still. The yellow and orange tones are low on the horizon and are reflected on the water signifying the dawn of a new day. Beyond the boathouse is the façade of a white building with what appears to be a tower topped by a flagpole. The multi-windowed building is a factory, one of manufacturers that the Weequahic Park Land Improvement Company drew into the master plan. The juxtaposition of seemingly contrasting images – the sun rising over suburban Newark and the subtle placement of a factory in the backdrop – modifies the notion of the developing city. Rather than casting industry as an anathema, “Scene in Weequahic Park” situates it within the scope of middle-class living. Labor does not disturb the tranquility of the park. Indeed, the positioning of the factory beyond the boathouse and trees marks the factory as just beyond the confines of Weequahic, but still a part of the Newark landscape.

The following postcards also integrate different facets of the Newark landscape in order to represent particular imaginings of Weequahic and the city. The Weequahic Park field house was located just east of the trotters track. The aptly titled postcard is a photograph of the “Field House” (Figure 2.21). The building housed storage rooms for sports equipment, as well as a meeting room. The two American flags are prominently in the picture. They indicate Patriotism. The raising of the flags may have been part of the commemoration of Newark’s 250th anniversary. They may have also been raised in tribute to American soldiers fighting in Europe. There are other objects in this picture besides the flags. A look at the left side of the postcard will reveal the roof of a bandstand behind the rows of trees on a hill sloping towards the lake. A look on the right side of the

postcard reveals grey hills rising from behind the row of trees on the horizon. The grey knolls are part of the Orange Mountains, a range of hills that are west of Newark. The homes in Weequahic are not seen, nor are the nearby factories, but the distant and prominent Orange Mountains and the nearby but obscured bandstand are seen in this picture. This juxtaposition alludes to the pageantry of recreation but also to the ruggedness of sports, particularly the vigor of American athletes. Additionally the symbolism of mountains can denote many meanings. The inclusion of mountains, as massive immovable objects, can imply the permanence of Newark and Weequahic, and the added imagery of the flag adds a touch of patriotic millennialism. More, mountains factor into religious and spiritual lore as sacred, elevated spaces. Newark, and more specifically suburban Weequahic, encapsulated a promised land for potential homebuyers.

The postcard simply titled “Weequahic Park” (Figure 2.22) captures a more active scene inside the park. The card is painted with warm blues and bright, verdant greens suggesting a warm May or June afternoon. The centerpiece of the photograph is two men canoeing while their paramours enjoy a relaxing jaunt on the water. The man at the head of the canoe appears to notice the photographer and acknowledges the man with a wave. His fellow paddler is wearing a paperboy cap and smiles for posterity to see. The lady in pink reclines as she casts a warm gaze to the camera. Seated across from her, her girlfriend, focuses her attention elsewhere. Behind the couples, persons walk along the shore past a line of cars that are parked along East Lake Drive. The Model T sedans, cruisers, and wagons are daubed in reds, blues, oranges, and yellows. The photograph conjures Weequahic Park as a destination of recreation, and coupled with the line of

automobiles, casts it as a classed space open to persons with enough disposable income to own personal modes of the transportation. “Field House” and “Weequahic Park” present class based imaginings of Weequahic Park. The “Boat House” postcards (Figure 2.23 and 2.24) utilize the lake and the boathouse to highlight the notion of Weequahic as a classed space of leisure, but these pictures also add elements that reflect Frank Bock’s vision of Weequahic as a nexus of healthy leisure within the city.

The first “Boat House” (Figure 2.23) is a photo of the early years of development in the Weequahic Park Tract. The picture prominently displays the park boathouse in the foreground, along with a pier and rows of boats. Beyond the boathouse, on elevated ground, is the Lehigh Valley Railroad Line, which was the western boundary of Weequahic Park until 1910. It is difficult to see the tracks, but the train signal on the immediate left of the boathouse alerts the viewer to the presence of rails and ties. Beyond the ridge of the Lehigh Valley Railroad lies Upper Elizabethtown Road, and ascending westward from the Upper Road is the curving bend of Renner Avenue. South of Renner are two stately homes in Weequahic. The second “Boathouse” postcard (Figure 2.24) is framed differently.

The first shot appears as though it is taken on land, whereas the second one appears as though it is taken on the lake. More, there is a lot more activity in this picture. There are two men, each in their own canoe, as well as persons walking along the lakeshore. This photo was more than likely taken years after the first “Boathouse” photo as there are more houses along Renner and Elizabeth Avenues. Additionally, a train, which has the attention of the man in the canoe, passes by the Lehigh Valley Railroad Company’s newly built train depot in Weequahic. The rail cars in the scene are not

passenger cars. They are freight wagons. The “Boathouse” postcards articulate a vision of city space. In particular, the second postcard, by including a freight car, suggests that industry is a value and not a blight upon the land. It proposes that bourgeois aesthetics and life can be present within urban residential geography. Proper planning could avert the industrial ruin of residential spaces like Weequahic.

In 1910, the New Jersey Legislature okayed the acquisition of the land between the Lehigh Valley Railroad line and Elizabeth Avenue in order to extend Weequahic Park to the foot of the residential tract. Over the next eight years a cadre of planners drew up plans for the acquired properties. The new developments included tennis courts, a bridle path, the rose garden featured in one postcard, and the Dividend Hill Monument.⁸⁹ The extension of Weequahic Park veiled the railroad behind rolling hills, neo-classical constructions, and groves of maple and oak trees. This final touch helped deepen the bucolic charm of the elegant homes along Elizabeth Avenue, and accentuated the Weequahic Section of Newark as a suburban reserve. It was a modern a place in comparison to the older, central city communities like Newark’s Third Ward. Elements that were prevalent in the Third were barred from Weequahic.

⁸⁹ Jeanne Kolva, *Olmstead Parks in New Jersey* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2011), 65-66.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM GHETTO TO GHETTO Jewish Entrée into Weequahic

In a March 17, 1922 edition of the *Jewish Chronicle* the editors opined about discriminatory apartment ads in the *Newark Evening News*.¹ The *Chronicle* reprinted the following ad: “Six large, cheerful rooms; all improvements except heat; third floor; Clinton Hill; vacant May 1; rent \$45; *Gentiles only*.”² Clinton Hill and Weequahic were restricted communities. These restrictions were imposed to maintain the value of properties, as buildings had to meet uniform design requirements and sections of the community were zoned to avert mixed use. Ethnoracial and class distinctions were also mandated to preclude the presence of Jews, Blacks and non- and not-quite whites who were deemed incompatible to modern, middle-class places. They were places absent the polyglot circumstances of Newark’s center city immigrant communities.

The zoning restrictions of suburban properties cannot be disentangled from national developments concerning immigration. While communities like Weequahic were developed as restricted places, federal legislators were in the process of legitimating racial restrictions in an attempt to preserve Whiteness.³ The Johnson-Reed Act, which was passed in 1924, “set quotas based on the (alleged) origins of the population in 1890, since that mixture was vastly more northern and western European than had the pattern of

¹ William B. Helmreich, *The Enduring Community; the Jews of Newark and Metrowest* (New Brunswick, N.J.; London: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 53.

² Ibid. Emphasis added.

³ For a reading of whiteness, see Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White; the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

immigration in recent decades.”⁴ Also known as the Immigration Act of 1924, the law was passed to stem in the influx of Eastern and Southern Europeans – including Jews fleeing persecution from Poland and Russia – into the United States. This law emerged out of the discourse of Whiteness, where non-Anglo Saxon, non-Protestant Europeans were deemed not quite white. Subsumed in this discourse of deviance were class norms that exalted the middle-class and castigated the poor.

In a *New York Times* letter to the editor, F.W. Tracy, a New Yorker, levied his thoughts on the “so-called discrimination” against Eastern and Southern Europeans in the Johnson immigration bill.⁵ Tracy actually believed that the use of the 1890 Census to determine who can enter the US discriminated, “in the opposite direction from that generally assumed,” because it did not accurately reflect the eminence of the Nation. He claimed that the use of the 1890 Census accounted for “immigration from 1860-1890,” which ignores the “immigration from 1607-1860.” He asked, “Why should our quota be based entirely on a period which comprises only thirty years out of a total history of 317 years?”⁶ Investing psychic value in a nostalgic American past, Tracy lauded the “settlements in the first two centuries of our history,” which “furnished the backbone of our nation and fixed its character.” He decried “modern lawmakers,” for “setting a value of zero on our original settlers, in order to favor the more recent arrivals to our shores.”⁷ Tracy’s satisfaction would’ve been met if the immigration law was “based on the entire history of our immigration,” and took “account not only of the

⁴ Roediger, 139.

⁵ F.W. Tracy, “Immigration Since 1607,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1924.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

numbers of each country by birth, but also by descent.” Tracy placed a premium on the racial stock of the United Kingdom, which he claimed two-thirds of the American population was “descended from,” and “until a few score years ago ... constituted about 90 per cent of the white population.”⁸ F. W. Tracy’s sentiments were a hyperbolic but no less illustrative example of the nativist sentiments of that informed the creation of the Johnson-Reed Act. The Johnson-Reed act was emblematic of anti-Semitic sentiment of the post-World War I period. Historian John Higham notes that following, “the Jews face a sustained agitation that singled them out from the other new immigrants blanketed by racial nativism—an agitation that reckoned them the most dangerous force undermining the nation.”⁹ American colleges and universities established precedence for checking the presence of Jews in American institutions by imposing limits on admitted Jewish students.¹⁰

The Jewish press in Newark covered the deliberations of the Johnson-Reed Act during its inception. *The Jewish Chronicle* was a Jewish weekly that was produced and edited by Anton Kaufman. Kaufman was a reporter for the *Berlin Morgenzeitung* before coming to the United States in 1905. A man with poor eyesight, in 1914 he established the *Detroit Jewish Chronicle* before coming to Newark and founding the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1921.¹¹ Historian Alan Kraut described the slant of Alan Kaufman’s weekly paper. The stories in the *Chronicle* were

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Higham. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 278.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Dr. Kaufman Killed in Eight-Story Fall,” *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, January 2, 1943.

Less about the quaint Russians buying chickens at the Prince Street markets or the Purim balls held to raise money for charity and more about Newark's generation of Jewish men and women whose reputations as leaders were based on their involvement in institutions that melded modernism with Jewish values.¹²

The *Chronicle* was a self-conscious paper that fostered the possibilities of American Jewishness. It sought to preserve Jewish culture in an American context. More, the *Chronicle* proffered counterpoint to nativist diatribes like those of F.W. Tracy.

In the months before the United States Congress voted on the Immigration Act of 1924, the *Chronicle* issued reports that showed the different reasons for the call for immigration reform. Some reporting showed the very much racist motivations for the bill. A February 1924 article reported on Secretary of Labor James J. Davis' speech before the Independent Order B'nai B'rith in Maryland. Davis addressed charges of discrimination that were levied against him by "the foreign-language press of America," whose constituents would be directly impacted by this bill.¹³ Davis, who supported immigration restriction, disavowed any unfairness in his calls for quotas. He asked, "How can anyone charge me with prejudice against the immigrant[?]. . . I am one myself." The Welsh-born Secretary, according the *Chronicle*, believed "there should be no discrimination as between racial groups in immigration legislation," and he did not believe in "the theory of Nordic superiority," but he insisted "restriction" was "absolutely necessary in order to maintain high wages and a high standard of living."¹⁴ Secretary Davis, in his discussion about alien registration, affirmed, "This is not intended to harass the immigrant." The motives, he believed, were altruistic. "It is only intended to make of the immigrant a good

¹² Alan M. Kraut and Deborah A. Kraut, *Covenant of Care: Newark Beth Israel and the Jewish Hospital in America* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 71-72.

¹³ "Foreign Language Press Slammed By Secretary Davis," *Jewish Chronicle*, February 29, 1924.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

American citizen; to teach him to read and write.”¹⁵ Secretary Davis pronounced that the Immigration Bill was a quality of life measure, a means of assimilating immigrants. What makes a good American citizen? Congressman Albert Johnson, one of the authors of the bill, offered some answers.

Congressman Johnson, Republican Representative from Washington State, was the chairman of the Immigration Committee for the House of Representatives. The immigration bill would bear his name. Speaking to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency about House Republican leaders’ reluctance to adopt his bill, Johnson threatened, “If the Jewish people combine to defeat the immigration bill as reported by the committee, their children will regret it.”¹⁶ The upshot of Johnson’s threat is not stated, but with resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and the proliferation of eugenics as *sound* science, Johnson’s words gave political sanctioning to the anti-Semitic tenor of the time. Certainly, Jews who fled the Russian pogroms were well aware of the possibility of state sanctioned violence. Notwithstanding Johnson’s vitriol, the *Chronicle* related that Johnson’s interests in reform were less about assimilating immigrants and more about the political leverage. The *Chronicle* reported that the Congressman scolded House Republicans, “who are being so much influenced by the fear of the immigrant vote in New York State,” and assured that constituencies outside of New York, Boston, and other cities with large immigrant populations “will also have something to say about immigration.”¹⁷ Johnson promised that nativists “will be in favor of his bill, irrespective of alien influence in New

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Jews Will Regret Immigration Bill’s Defeat, Johnson Threat,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, February 29, 1974, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

York.” Johnson was most concerned with the balance of voting power, and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe voted decidedly Democratic. His concerns were not unfounded. As immigrants moved up the social ladder, left poor residences in core cities, and migrated towards outlying communities, they not only changed the ethnic and class landscape of the suburbs, but the political one as well.

Thomas Reed, Professor of Municipal Government in the University of California noted the make-up of the population shifts between Newark and the suburbs of Essex County. Writing in 1938, Reed perceived, “certain significant changes in the character of the suburban population.” He pointed out that “Instead of being made up almost exclusively of commuters to New York,” suburban residents began to include “a large and increasing proportion of men and women whose occupations are in Newark, or Jersey City, and other Hudson County municipalities.” Giving further evidence of the demographic shifts between Newark and suburban Essex County, Reed observes that

While twenty years ago the commuters were almost wholly business men, professional men, and the *better class* of white-collar employees, there are now to be counted among them many workers, skilled and unskilled, in the great industries established in Newark and across the Passaic in Kearny, Harrison, East Newark, and even beyond the marshes in Jersey City.¹⁸

Prior to the Depression, the Essex County suburbs were decidedly Republican-voting blocs in local and national elections. Reed noted that in 1936, Roosevelt “carried the County by thirty thousand, and the Republican candidates for Supervisor and Freeholders were elected by only a few hundred votes.” Congressman Johnson’s trepidations regarding recent immigrants and the shift of power favoring Democratic candidates were not unfounded.

¹⁸ Thomas Reed, *Thomas Years of Government in Essex County, New Jersey* (New York; London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), 5. Emphasis added.

The irony of the Johnson-Reed Act is that the concentration of capital that allowed for middle-class growth in the suburbs grew out of the industrial expansion that was predicated on immigrant labor.¹⁹ The Immigration Act led to the sharp decrease in immigrant labor, which resulted in a sharp increase of African American migration from the Southern states to replace *not-quite-white* laborers.²⁰ To be sure, the Great Migration started in earnest in 1916 as World War I curtailed European immigration. The Great Migration brought an increased number of Black migrants into close contact with Jewish immigrants in cities like Newark.

The Old Third Ward Ghetto

The Third Ward, Newark's central residential and commercial district, was a variegated district of different communities, structures, statuses, races, religions, and nationalities. The Third Ward was the city's oldest neighborhood. In many ways, it was also the inverse of Weequahic. There was High Street, the posh residence for Newark's early industrial barons. A number of German Jews, who came in an immigration wave that predated that of the Eastern European and Russians Jews, lived there. Running from Clinton Avenue in the south and Springfield Avenue in the North, residents in the stately mansions on High Street could look over Broad Street and downtown Newark or cast their gaze further east to the New York skyline. High Street fronted the Hill, the Third's significantly aged and poorer district. Buildings in the Hill were wooden tenements that

¹⁹ Many reasons were proffered for the creation of the Johnson-Reed Act. Notable reasons were the correlation of labor protest, strikes and violence on hand with the influence of Communist and Socialist influence from Eastern and Southern European immigrants. See Roediger's discussion of Johnson-Reed Act in *Working Towards Whiteness*, 144-149.

²⁰ Roediger, 151.

lacked heat, indoor toilets, plumbing, or were constructed haphazardly. These tenements were within walking distance to Newark's factories. Interspersed amongst these tenements were taverns, speakeasies, and other dens of revelry that were barred from Clinton Hill and Weequahic. And there was Prince Street, a veritable bazaar where Jewish merchants sold foodstuffs and wares from storefronts and pushcarts. Prince Street and indeed the Third Ward were congested places, teeming with people and with activity.

As Newark transitioned from a large village to an industrial hub, the Third Ward was the *zone of transition*, where previous (im)migrants from Germany, Ireland, and Italy resided before they moved outward to other communities and made way for Russian and Eastern European Jews. The most recent arrivals were clustered in the older centermost neighborhoods, whereas the older settlers moved out to the newer or polished residence like High Street, or to peripheral communities like Clinton Hill and Weequahic. Following the post-World War I economic surge, African Americans migrated into a Third Ward that was predominantly Jewish. "A Map of Newark" elucidates the sundry enclaves within and around Newark's Third Ward. More, it shows just how significant the immigrant population was.²¹ In 1910, 347,469 people lived in the city. Of that, an estimated 235,000 were foreign born or were children of foreign-born parents. Roughly two out of three Newarkers were classified as non-white. Germans, Greeks, Jews, and Negroes lived and worked in the Third Ward, a neighborhood that, according to former

²¹ "A Map Of Newark With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate," Presbyterian Church in Newark in 1910. NPL See Figure 3.1.

Newark resident Sam Convissor, “rivalled in looks and spirit the Lower Eastside of New York City.”²² A probe of the Lower East Side sheds light on diversity in the Third Ward.

Michael Gold narrates a fact-based account of Jewish life in early 20th century Lower Eastside of New York in his novel *Jews Without Money*. Gold was born in 1894 to Romanian Jewish parents, Chaim and Gittel Granich. In the novel his father’s name is Herman and his mother’s name is Katie. Gold described his neighborhood as a montage of xenophobia:

The Eastside, for children, was a world plunged in eternal war. It was suicide to walk into the next block. Each block was a separate nation, and when a strange boy appeared, the patriots swarmed.²³

If traversing the neighborhood was not dangerous enough, law enforcement did not help.

“The cops on our street were no worse than most cops, and no better.”²⁴ Aside from “guzzling free beer,” they were “intimate,” with “the prostitutes, and with all the thieves, cokefiends, pimps, and gamblers of the neighborhood.” Gold’s friend, a Jewish boy nicknamed “Nigger” disdained the police. He “began to hate the cops at an early age.”

Naming a Jew *Nigger*, as literal device, does many things. It casts the Jews’ racialized experience akin to the Black experience, where the paradigm of African American resistance to oppression is a template of resilience for Not-Quite-White Folks to follow.

Gold recounts the valor of his band of brothers, and the singularity of the cop hater:

Joey Cohen, a dreamy boy with spectacles, was brave. Stinker claimed to be brave... Abie, Izzy, Fat, Maxie, Pishtepel, Harry, all were indubitably brave... But Nigger was bravest of the brave, the chieftain of our brave savage tribe.²⁵

²² Samuel M. Convissor, “A Brief Historical View” (a paper presented to the Social Awareness Committee at Temple Sharey Tefillo, East Orange, NJ, January 25, 1974), 8.

²³ Mike Gold, *Jews Without Money* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1996), 42.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

The Jew nicknamed Nigger suggests an appreciation and affinity towards Black people's plight. Gold's deployment is not so much like Al Jolson's use of black vernacular, which renders his Jewishness as white, and gives life to the gentler and more passionate aspects of white American popular culture through the exaggerated caricature of black folk culture. Rather, Nigger is a metonym that suggests the amalgamation of poverty and non-white status in the space of ghettos like the Lower East Side and Newark's Third Ward.²⁶ The Jewish boy named Nigger, who fought against *patriots* from other blocks and threw rocks at the police, eventually became part of the Lower East Side criminal underworld. Gold also culls from popular stereotypes of Native Americans through the deployment of terms "brave," "chieftain," and "savage."²⁷ Such uses position the young Lower Eastside Jew as opposite White modernity. If restricted neighborhoods like Weequahic were imagined as White, quiet, Christian, and middle class, inner city communities like the Third Ward were non-white, disorderly, Jewish (perhaps Catholic), and poor.

Gold did not always see conflict between the diverse peoples in the Lower East Side. At various times the different *nations* within a community got along like gangbusters. Gold's mother took a job in a cafeteria in order to help make ends meet.

²⁶ Literary critic Eric J. Sundquist explains that "Typically less educated and less well off economically than those German Jews who had arrived in the nineteenth century and become more assimilated, the mostly Orthodox, mostly Yiddish-speaking new immigrants settled predominantly in the urban North, where they collided with the newly arrived black "immigrants" from the rural South, who seemed in some respects their mirror image" (26). See Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) William J. Maxwell offers a more nuanced assessment, calling Gold's deployment of such tropes, "a risky attempt to affiliate black and Jewish resistance by subverting the worst racist language from within"(102). See Maxwell's "The Proletarian as New Negro: Mike Gold's Harlem Renaissance" in *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture* ed. Bill Mullen and Sherry Linkon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

²⁷ Gold, 43.

Gold recalled that his mother had trepidations about working “among Christians.”²⁸ Her fears gave way to ease as she “easily settled into the life of the polyglot kitchen, and learned to fight, scold, and mother the Poles, Germans, Italians, Irish, and Negroes who worked there.”²⁹ Katie was so well liked by her non-white *children* that they called her “‘Momma,’” which, according to Gold, “made her vain.” Katie worked outside of her home and this was not consistent with Victorian standards of femininity. Women’s labor outside of the home is emblematic of working class normalcy and urban space. Katie works because her husband was incapacitated while working. Literary scholar Janet Burstein states that “in a world where most Jews were poor and politically impotent, women’s work at home and in the marketplace was acknowledge to be an ‘essential component of physical and cultural survival.’”³⁰ For working class Jewish families, an additional income from the woman was sometimes necessary.³¹ Within early 20th century American ghettos there was space for public encounters between Jewish women and others.

Gold narrated a story of the dialogue between a black man named Joe and Katie.

Katie recounted the conversation to her children:

You should hear how a big black dishwasher named Joe, how he comes to me to-day, and says, ‘Momma, I’m going to quit. Every one is against me here because I am black,’ he says. ‘The whole world is against us black people.’³²

²⁸ Ibid., 245.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Janet Burstein, “Translating Immigrant Women: Surfacing the Manifold Self,” *Talk Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* ed. Joyce Antler (Hanover; London: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 15.

³¹ For a discussion of wage-earning Jewish mothers, see Hasia Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly’s *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 211.

³² Gold, 245.

Katie goes on to tell Joe that she's not against him and advises him not to be "foolish," and to not be a "bum again." She tells him that his problem is he is "lazy," and that if he "would work harder," the others would like him. Joe affirmatively responds, "Momma, all right I'll stay." Katie proudly concludes the story, "They call me Momma, even the black ones."³³ Scholar Eric Homberger considers Katie, "the embodiment of a wider proletarian solidarity of the poor."³⁴ Katie's anecdote about Joe demonstrates the geniality between blacks and Jews. But it also strongly suggests at dissonances, conflicts created by Communism's reduction of racism; and the ways in which Whiteness obscures the structures of a racialized Blackness. When Joe says that *every one* is against him, he is not talking about a group of individuals as much as he is talking about systemic practices of racism. Gold, whose novel is critical of capitalism and the exploitation of immigrants, may not have been especially sensitive to the particularity of the racial experience of African Americans.³⁵ Indeed, Katie works hard, but her labor tragically does not shield her from harm as she is mortally injured after being run over by a wagon when she leaves her tenement in order to procure tinder for wood-burning stove. The

³³ Ibid., 246.

³⁴ Eric Homberger, "Some Uses for Jewish Ambivalence: Abraham Cahan and Michael Gold" in *Between "race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature* ed. Bryan Cheyette (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 178.

³⁵ Curtis Lucas' novel *Third Ward Newark* offers a more nuanced understanding of the race, exploitation, and exclusion in Newark. I will delve into these differences later on. Gold recognized class exploitation, but he may not have fully perceived racial repression of blacks. Conversely, Gold may have acknowledged that racial discrimination was an impediment, but acquiescing to the state of poverty by quitting was simply unacceptable. That said, Gold observed the problems inherent to the slums, and through his narrative condemns the owners of capital and extols virtues of labor. Indeed one of the main thrusts of *Jews Without Money* is that first and second generation American Jews, particularly those from Eastern Europe and Russia, maintained the ethnoreligious mores of their forebears. In Gold's estimation, capitalist exploitation and repression were a constant in both Europe and the United States.

ghetto Jews of Europe became the ghetto Jews of America. Gold through his novel, explicated Yiddishkeit, or modern Jewish culture, in early 20th century cities.

Mutuality and Leadership in the Ghetto

Blacks and Jews shared mutual interests, and sometimes worked together to correct the problems of racism and anti-Semitism that confronted recent immigrants and migrants from the South. These interests were born out of their meeting in places like Newark's Third Ward. Hasia Diner points out that the "behavior of Jews," in first three decades of the 20th century, "and their involvement and support for civil rights and other allied causes of black advancement reflected their hopes and fears at that moment in time."³⁶ Black and Jewish identities originated not from "a particular nation-state," but rather from "a religio-cultural diasporic 'nation' with an identifiable set of relations to sacred texts and a lost homeland."³⁷ Karen Brodtkin submits that a socio-political affinity existed between Blacks and Jews. Indeed, the ghettos of the Lower Eastside and Newark's Third Ward were not the first Jewish ghettos. In Eastern Europe and Russia, the rise of capitalism was undergirded by trenchant anti-Semitism that led to the segregation of Jews in Polish and Romanian ghettoes and state sanctioned violence against Jews in Russia. Under these dire circumstances Jews "developed a secular Yiddish culture," that "provided a common link with intellectual, political, and artistic

³⁶ Hasia Diner *In the Almost Promised Land; American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xiii.

³⁷ Ibid. The theme of African Americans belonging to *nation within a nation* provides insight into the ways black agency despite racial class and caste hindrances. These analyses explore black culture and history through Gramsci's theory of the subaltern. See Steven Hahn's *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Belknap, 2003); and Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country; Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

excitement of urban modernism.”³⁸ This secular Jewishness was culled under the exigencies of oppressive capitalist states. The combining of the sacred and the secular in Jewish tradition was called Yiddishkeit. According to Brodtkin, the particularity of the Eastern and Russian Jewish experiences, “combined to break down the class divisions, between the wealthy and learned on the one hand, and the ordinary manual workers on the other.”³⁹ As such, it should be little wonder that Eastern European and Russian Jews would be particularly invested in social justice causes in the United States. The experience of anti-Semitism in the old country made immigrant Jews particularly disposed anti-racism in the United States. Under Yiddishkeit, “Jews emphasized living a moral life developed in a communal, working class, and decidedly leftist political direction.”⁴⁰ In Newark, there were Jews involved in the labor movement, as well as others that were active members of communist and socialist organizations.⁴¹ As such, blacks and Jews responded to anti-Semitism and racism in ways that affirmed their distinctiveness and at the same time affirmed their place as participants in American democracy. Blacks and Eastern European and Russian Jews in the Third Ward occupied what Eric Sundquist calls “the shifting margins of American life.”⁴² Newark’s Blacks and Jewish leadership sought ways of bringing their peoples from the margins to the center.

³⁸ Brodtkin, 106.

³⁹ Ibid. German and Western European Jews had qualitatively different experiences as immigrants than Eastern European and Russian Jews. See Brodtkin, 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 107.

⁴¹ Helmreich, 26-27.

⁴² Eric Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge; London: Belknap Press, 2005), 18.

Whereas Mike Gold understood black-Jewish mutuality in the militant truculence of the character Nigger, there was a less recalcitrant mutuality between blacks and Jews in Newark. Middle class blacks sought the sponsorship of middle class and wealthy patrons for *uplift* initiatives.⁴³ Newark's German Jews were amenable to the calls for support. Clement Price, in his study of middle class civil rights campaigns in Newark, called these activities "clientage politics."⁴⁴ Black urban reformers sought to ameliorate the suffering of the black poor, but these activities "rarely involved planned civil rights activities or organized protest."⁴⁵ Black and Jewish reformers orchestrated initiatives that would improve the conditions of poor Jews and Blacks through the appropriation of middle-class behaviors that would, in theory, stem the deprivations in the Third Ward. These notions of conditional difference were couched in Victorian and even eugenicist notions that placed the onus for economic inequalities on the individual, as opposed to system of policies that privileged native middle-class white American communities over poor immigrant and migrant communities.

World War I hostilities stemmed the flow of immigration from Europe and increased the rate of black migration to industrial hubs. African Americans struck out from the Southern states for cities like Newark, seeking the prospects of good wages and a life free of the restrictions of Jim Crow. Blacks entering industry were paid less than their white or not-quite-white counterparts. Some black women were able to secure work as daily and live-in domestics. Like previous generations of immigrants, rural blacks

⁴³ For a discussion of *racial uplift* see Kevin Kelly Gaines' *Uplifting the Race; Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture since the Turn of the Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ Clement Price, "The Struggle to Desegregate Newark: Black Middle Class Militancy in New Jersey, 1932-1947" in *New Jersey History* Vol. 98 Fall-Winter 1981, 218.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

entered older central city communities like the Third Ward, but the flats they moved into were the same old flats where “Three families,” lived in “four rooms,” in a “little house not fit for a chicken coop.”⁴⁶ The communities in which they lived provided few institutional supports for recent migrants, save for the generosity of old settler Negroes and churches.⁴⁷

The Negro Welfare League of New Jersey (NWL) was established “at various points in the State,”⁴⁸ to address poor housing conditions and problems associated with overcrowding and poverty. William Ashby, New Jersey’s first social worker, was appointed the executive secretary of the Newark branch of the NWL. Born in Carter’s Grove, Virginia, Ashby and his family moved to Newport News after four envious white men killed his wealthy grandfather. Ashby graduated from Lincoln University in 1911, and earned a degree in divinity from Yale in 1916. Ashby was particularly worried about the young black woman migrating to Newark. They often arrived in the city not properly clothed for Northern winters, and were often subjected to the “moral temptations” in the city.⁴⁹ Young black women could not make use of the Young Women’s Christian Association that provide accommodations and assistance to White, Christian women.

⁴⁶ Quote from February 17, 1917 issue of *the Survey* as quoted by Emmet Jay Scott, in his *Negro Migration During the War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920).

⁴⁷ Ibid. From the *Survey*: “The native negro residents of the city and suburban towns have been kind and generous in helping the southern stranger. They have collected money to send numbers back home, and when the bitter cold weather began they collected and distributed thousands of garments. Residents negroes have also taken hundreds of newcomers into their own homes until rooms could be found for them. But while different churches and kind hearted people had been most active in helping individually, there was no concerted movement to bring all these forces together until the organization of the Negro Welfare League of New Jersey” (139).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Williams Mobile Ashby *Tales Without Hate* (Newark, NJ: Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee, 1980), 75.

Black migrant women without families, “simply stood out and alone without a buffer of any sort.”⁵⁰

A boarding house was the solution. The cost of securing a suitable building was prohibitive. Ashby discussed the idea with a member of NWL’s executive board. She recommended Ashby meet with Caroline Fuld née Bamberger, sister of Louis Bamberger and wife of Felix Fuld. They were wealthy German Jews who owned the L. Bamberger Company. The Fuld’s and Bamberger’s munificence was vital to the development of cultural institutions in Newark, as they endowed projects that benefitted the larger public. Fuld contributed funds for the creation of the Newark Museum and the Newark Public Library. The Fuld’s provided an initial contribution of five hundred dollars to Ashby, and Mrs. Fuld solicited contributions from her cadre of friends. The combination of philanthropic dollars from Caroline Fuld coupled with monies Ashby acquired from interested industries provided funds to purchase a four-story building at 58 West Market Street. The first floor was used for offices while the upper three floors were converted into dormitories for black migrant women. The building would eventually serve as the headquarters for the Newark branch of the Urban League. The National Urban League was created in 1910 to assist African American migrants make the transition to urban conditions. The league recognized that African Americans were relegated to the most menial jobs and the worst housing. It provided them material as well as communal supports in order to help migrants become better adjusted to a city that did not proffer African Americans provisions for social mobility.

Immigrant Jews faced the similar challenges. The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) gave account of the condition of the Jewish community in Newark’s Third Ward, stating

⁵⁰ Ibid., 76.

that “at least 20,000 Jews” lived in the Third Ward.”⁵¹ Almost 20% of them were “between the ages of ten and nineteen.” JWB described the Third Ward as “one of the most congested parts of the city,” where some lived “above and behind stores or in tenements.”⁵² The Third Ward lacked an “organized community effort concerned with,” the problems faced by these young men and women. JWB articulated the lack of provisions in the Third as more than a shortage of housing, recreation, or employment. They espoused a social uplift that sought to embrace the particularity of their Jewishness:

There are boys and girls with immense possibilities who are caught in the complexes of different languages, customs, ideas; who are cramped in dingy homes; who, unacquainted with the beautiful presentation of Judaism, are disinherited from the spiritual wealth that is rightly theirs.⁵³

The Young Men’s and Women’s Hebrew Association opened at the corner of High Street and Kinney Street in May 1924 with the expressed purpose of providing a social space for immigrant Jews to “feel welcome in.”⁵⁴ The High Street “Y” sponsored “dramatic clubs, glee clubs, literary clubs, theater, lectures,” and provided “extensive sport facilities,” in order provide practical recreation to help immigrants acclimate to American culture.⁵⁵ But more, the Jewish high holidays were celebrated at the Y. Lectures were delivered in Yiddish. According Manuel Bratshaw, “We sang Jewish songs and celebrated our Jewish holidays. We also learned the meaning of *tsedaka* through

⁵¹ As quoted in *The Enduring Community*, 52.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

participating in the UJA.”⁵⁶ The High Street “Y” was an institution that facilitated the integration of first generation Jews into Newark. Michael Stavitsky was the sponsor for this institution. Stavitsky was a kindred spirit to Williams Ashby, working as a social worker and providing service towards those in need.

Stavitsky was born in Russia in 1895. He and his family immigrated to the United States and settled in Newark in 1903. An educated and pious family, the Stavitskys were from a long line of rabbis, teachers, cantors, and merchants. In 1908 Stavitsky was one of six boys that joined the Jewish Neighborhood House, an organization that, similar to the Negro Welfare League, was tasked with “looking after immigrant girls.”⁵⁷ According to journalist Anton Kaufman, Stavitsky watched his parents collect clothes and money for “the orphan, the indigent sick, Jewish education, and Palestine.”⁵⁸ Stavitsky supported his parents’ charitable endeavors while in middle school by working after school. He attended Barringer High School, where he graduated in three and half years. While in high school he dedicated his free time to the Jewish Neighborhood House, serving as a club member and eventually becoming the club’s president and leader. After Barringer, Stavitsky matriculated through New York University where he resumed his extracurricular service to the cause of those in need. His course of study, in addition to his extensive work in the social work field, led to a series of appointments within the Y.M.H.A. club movement. First he was the Manhattan club leader, and, from 1917 until 1918, he was named one of three national field secretaries. In this capacity he traveled

⁵⁶ *The Enduring Community*, 139.

⁵⁷ Henry Wellington Wack *Official Guide and Manual of the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of Newark, New Jersey, 1666-1916* (Newark Sales and Advertising Company, 1916), 21.

⁵⁸ Anton Kaufman, “The Story of Dynamic Michael A. Stavitsky,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, June 20, 1941.

across the United States, establishing and administering Y.M.-Y.W.H.A.'s in Jewish communities. In 1919, after a stint in the United States Army Signal Corps, Stavitsky became National Director of the Jewish Welfare Board, which took over the "Y" movement for the Jewish community. As national director he was a fundraiser for branches of the Jewish "Y" throughout the country, including Y.M.-Y.W.H.A.'s in Paterson, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and in 1924, Newark.

Stavitsky was a key figure in the establishment of Jewish aid institutions in Newark. In addition to founding the Y, he was a key fundraiser for the new Beth Israel Hospital.⁵⁹ A newer, more modern Beth Israel Hospital would eventually open its doors in the Weequahic section in 1928. The Beth was originally located in the heart of the Third Ward on High Street. Like much of the infrastructure of the surrounding community, the Jewish hospital was old; not large enough to attend to an increasing number of patients; and not modern enough to accommodate state-of-art medical equipment or procedures. The Beth's board of directors selected the heart of the Weequahic Park Tract at the block of Lyons Avenue, Osborne Terrace, and Lehigh Avenue for the site of the modern Beth Israel Hospital. The owners of those lots initially were resistant to selling property to Jews. How did Jews enter Weequahic?

Jewish Blockbusting

In order to answer that question, it's important to consider the correlation between race, class, and residential space. While public officials and private citizens castigated Eastern and Southern Europeans, and Russian immigrants, racial designations that informed racial exclusion did not correlate with the realities of middle-class Jewish

⁵⁹ See Kraut and Kraut, 71.

life. As Jews accumulated more resources, they self-consciously observed American norms, while at the same time maintaining their traditions. The Jewish pioneers in Weequahic were members of the middle-class.

Homer Hoyt in his study of land values in Chicago observed the demographic shifts that occurred during the first three decades of 20th century, notably the influx of European immigrants.⁶⁰ He perceived that land valuers judged

Racial and national groups, because of their lower economic status and their lower standards of living, pay less rent themselves and cause a greater physical deterioration of property than groups higher in the social and economic scale.⁶¹

There was a belief that poverty was a cause of blight. As such, “Land values in areas occupied by such classes are therefore inevitably low.”⁶² Hoyt accedes that the “attitude reflected in lower land values is due entirely to racial prejudice, which may have no reasonable basis.”⁶³ There were points of discrepancy in the criteria deployed by realtors and landlords to exclude ethno-racial minorities.

Except in the case of negroes and Mexicans, however, these racial and national barriers disappear when the individuals in the foreign nationality groups rise in the economic scale and conform to American standards of living.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Homer Hoyt’s *One Hundred Years of Land Values In Chicago* as quoted in Mabel L. Walker’s *Urban Blight and Slums: Economic and Legal Factors in Their Origin, Reclamation, and Prevention* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1938), 33.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Hoyt highlights the hierarchy of races and nationalities. Those at the top of the list have “the most favorable” impact on land values, while those on the bottom exert “the most detrimental effect” (33). “1. English, Germans, Scotch, Irish, Scandinavian; 2. North Italian; 3. Bohemians or Czechoslovakians; 4. Poles; 5. Lithuanians; 6. Greeks; Russian Jews of the lower class; 8. South Italians; 9. Negroes; 10. Mexicans.” Hoyt concedes that the ranking may be, “scientifically wrong from the standpoint of inherent racial characteristics,” but it “registers an opinion or prejudice that is reflected in land values; it is the ranking of races and nationalities with respect to their beneficial effect upon land values” (Ibid.).

Jews from Newark and other urban Jewish enclaves in New York accumulated resources and influence to make forays into Weequahic despite opposition from property holders. The campaign to raise money for the Beth was a communal effort to upgrade a much-needed institution, but it was also a response to the anti-Semitism made law by the Johnson-Reed Immigration Bill. Furthermore, it provided an institutional space for Jewish doctors and nurses to practice medicine as Newark's public hospitals barred Jews medical professionals. Their campaign to build a modern hospital was a movement to articulate Jewishness as essential to the fabric of the Nation. The campaign for the Beth was an effort to redefine the discourse of racial caricature, and a means to subverting eugenicist arguments with the sway of charity and the almighty dollar.

Jewish families observed middle class customs of domesticity and leisure as they made incursions into Weequahic before the Johnson-Reed Act. A January 1922 issue of the *Chronicle* announced the wedding of Cecelia Shifman to John Roseman.⁶⁵ The wedding must have warranted attention because Cecelia's father was Samuel Shifman, president of the Newark bedding manufacture Shifman & Brother.⁶⁶ Shifman and his wife lived close to Weequahic Park at 17 Weequahic Avenue. The following year, Shifman's son, Arthur, married Rose Bromberg before family and friends at Temple B'nai Abraham.⁶⁷ After their honeymoon in Washington, DC and other destinations in the South, Arthur and Rose moved into a home on Weequahic Avenue. Beryl Benderly and Hasia Diner described Jewish women who were "self-consciously American," and as they married "for love," and "fed, clothed, and furnished" their families and homes

⁶⁵ *Chronicle*, January, 20, 1922.

⁶⁶ "Obituary – Pauline Shifman," *The Jewish Chronicle*, October 13, 1939.

⁶⁷ "Social and Personal," *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 23, 1923.

according to “American fashion.”⁶⁸ These women were dedicated to “upward mobility, “ as they “departed in many ways from old world-conventions.” Despite nativist claims that the influx of Jews and other immigrants had to be stemmed in order to make good Americans, members of the Jewish community were already engaged in what ethnographer Sherry Ortner calls *class projects*.⁶⁹ Residing in Weequahic was one such classing project.

As early as 1922, Weequahic was becoming a middle-class Jewish neighborhood. As discussed in the previous chapter, evidence did not indicate that restrictive covenants were written into property deeds in Newark’s southern residential districts. The prejudices of individual lessors did not preclude Jewish entry into Weequahic. Jewish forerunners into Weequahic were more than likely German Jews who were fairly integrated into Newark’s social landscape. As “A Map of Newark, With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate” (Figure 3.1) indicates, by 1920 there were German enclaves in Clinton Hill, Weequahic’s antecedent. More, it is quite possible that sales were slow during the post-World War I economic recession. Weequahic developers had to unload lots and homes, and Jews with money were potential customers. Classifieds in the *Chronicle*, the Jewish weekly, announced the availability of a number of properties throughout Newark and the surrounding suburbs. Walter’s Exchange, a Newark real estate trader, placed three ads in the March 17, 1922, issue of the *Chronicle*. One ad was for a “Cozy little gem” in Weequahic that featured “8 rooms,” a “sun parlor,” “tile roof”,

⁶⁸ Hasia Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly *Her Works Praise Her; A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Book, 2002), 194.

⁶⁹ Ortner says, “If class is always an object of desire (or repulsion), whether historically or in the present, then it seems more useful to think of people, groups, policy makers, culture makers, and so on, as engaged in ‘class projects’ rather than, or in addition to, being occupants of particular classes-as-locations”(13). See Ortner’s *New Jersey Dreaming: Capitol, Culture, and the Class of ’58*.

and a “two-car garage.”⁷⁰ The home was built upon “a large plot”, and to assure the buyer of its impeccable design, it was “built like you would build for yourself.”⁷¹

The editors at the *Chronicle* understood the need for the Jewish community to assimilate to middle-class American cultural norms. The Jewish weekly featured columns that provided insight into the manners and proclivities of the middle-class non-Jewish Whites, a lifestyle that provided Jews an atlas for upward mobility. The *Chronicle* informed its readers of the proper methods of building a home in a suburban enclave through the weekly feature “Home Beautiful.”

“Home Beautiful” was a column that apprised readers to the latest trends in home design and decorating. More, it educated the burgeoning Jewish community of the proper conduct for living in modern, middle-class communities. The March 14, 1924 edition of “Home Beautiful” elaborated on home design and construction. It informed readers that “it is sometime[s] expedient to adhere to local tradition, both when choosing structural materials and selecting the architectural style for a new home—even though rather at the expense of individuality.”⁷² The writer did not want Jews to undermine the established patterns of character in modern communities. The writer instructed the prospective Jewish homebuilder to construct homes in Weequahic that followed Frank Bock’s vision of a standardized community, insuring that “a house is to be built upon a site of restricted street-frontage in a neighborhood where all the other houses are practically uniform in material and general character.”⁷³ It was “desirable to ... avoid the introduction of too

⁷⁰ “Advertisement,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, March, 17, 1922.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Home Beautiful,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 14, 1924.

⁷³ Ibid.

strongly differentiated material and forms.”⁷⁴ The writer maintains that consistency of design between houses in a community is important. This consistency in house design is matched by the homogeneity of the people, in which

our homes are, like their occupants, not just so many individuals, but rather, a definite part of the community at large. As such, they surely ought to be governed, to some degree at least, by neighborhood conventions and customs, even as we ourselves are.⁷⁵

The writer submits that Jews must comport themselves to the principles and norms of middle-class living, which are distinguished from working-class living. If the core city was a culturally variegated space of immigrants and unseasoned foreigners, then a modern community like Weequahic was a homogenous spaces that reflected the better parts of American traditions.

The architectural designs recommended by “Home Beautiful” corresponded to the hierarchy of ethno-cultural fitness for American culture. Acceptable architectural designs mirrored the racially prejudicial rankings Hoyt outlined in his study of land values. Frame houses “in connection with New England or Dutch Colonial design, with Swiss or Norwegian architecture,” were most favored, but “Spanish or Italian architectural forms,” were not.⁷⁶ Brick faced structures of “Colonial, French or English style,” were accepted, but “we have not thought of it as a structural medium for, say, the Mission type of building,” which was based on Spanish Catholic motifs.⁷⁷ The built environment of Weequahic reflected the class and ethnoracial social order of 1920s America, and Jews

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

comported themselves to adhering to these standards. The campaign for Beth Israel illustrates the effort of Newark Jews to affirm themselves as Americans.

In the months leading up to the vote on the Johnson-Reed Bill, the *Jewish Chronicle* released a series of articles that called upon Newark Jews to affirm their patriotism through their donations to the Beth. A March 14, 1924 article announced the capital campaign for the new hospital, but it also made pronouncements that envisioned Jewish identity as a model of American exceptionalism. “Newark will shortly have the finest hospital in the State. Not merely the finest Jewish hospital, but the finest institution for the healing of the sick in New Jersey.”⁷⁸ Reaffirming the liberality of the Beth, the writer attests that “No distinction will be made between Jew and non-Jew, between rich and poor. It will be ‘non-sectarian’—as Jewish hospitals invariably are—in the broadest, finest sense of the word.”⁷⁹ The writer, A. H. Fromenson, posed an incredulous question to the director of the Beth Israel Hospital, Frank Liveright. Fromenson asked if there was a “real need” for a \$1,500,000 new hospital. Liveright responded by highlighting the dearth of medical facilities for Newark:

I should say it is needed. Why, do you know, Newark has only one bed for every 800 of its population of 500,000! That’s about one-fourth of the number which health authorities are agreed a city should have.... Except for the City Hospital, there’s not a single, modern, fireproof hospital in Newark.⁸⁰

He then gives particular attention to the needs of Newark’s Jewish community, citing instances in which Jewish patients were turned away because the old Beth’s 110 beds were not sufficient for a Jewish population of 60,000. He neglected to mention that

⁷⁸ A. H. Fromenson “Campaign for \$1,500,000 for Beth Israel Hospital to Begin in May,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 14, 1924.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Jewish doctors could not practice at City Hospital. Liveright was confident that the Jews of Newark would delve into their pocketbooks and support the Beth.

The Johnson-Reed Act was enacted on May 26, 1924, but proponents for the building of the Beth remained vigilant in their campaign. Four days after the Johnson-Reed Act was passed, an op-ed titled “My Heart is With the Hospital” appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*. The commentary made assertions about the purpose of Newark Jews and the obligations to themselves and the community in which they lived through the use of the trope “a good heart.”⁸¹ The writer stated that the heart “is the most fundamental part of life,” and suggested, “a good heart is ... the best guarantee of a vigorous and sustaining age.”⁸² Heart is an allegory for the process of investment: the investment of time and attention, and for the purposes of the Beth, the investment of funds. Heart has “symbolic meaning” in the “social and charitable and religious activities in the world.”⁸³ As such the writer submits a rhetorical question that forced the Jewish readership to interrogate their individual investments and their obligations to their community: “Now is the time for every Jew to ask and to demand a quick and satisfactory answer: “Where is my heart?”⁸⁴ He proffers some tentative answers that are rooted in the trends and exigencies of Third Ward Newark.

The writer perceives that Newark has a range of diversions, and that some of those pursuits may not be in the best interest of the community at large. These ruminations provide insight into the writer’s moral compass, which places him well

⁸¹ “My Heart Is With The Hospital,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 20, 1924.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ “My Heart Is With The Hospital.”

within the range of Progressives. He recognized that some of his readership may be most concerned with making money, as “the hearts of some be in their pocketbooks, or riveted to the safety deposit vaults.”⁸⁵ Others may be “lingering in the dance halls or lured to a scene of frivolity or folly.”⁸⁶ The writer intimates insecurity concerning first and second generation Newark Jews. These greedy and irreligious folk may be misguided in their self-serving pursuits of pleasure, acquisition, and revelry. The writer exhorts,

Let us call them back and demand that they center next week in the hospital, in helping a noble cause in building up a great Jewish institution, in promoting the honor of the Jewish name, in serving our beloved city by making health sounder for all its inhabitants.⁸⁷

These declarations appear self-conscious and responsive to surge of anti-Semitism and nativism in the post-World War I period. To be sure, the writer is not calling for the provisions or privileges of Whiteness. He calls for his readership to elevate its purpose in order to subvert eugenicist claims of Jewish deficiency. “Newark Jewry will add new laurels to its honored name; Newark Jewry will win the homage and gratitude of posterity.”⁸⁸ These prognostications seem grandiloquent, but in fact they render Jewish identity representative of the principles inherent to the best of American ideals. The writer affirmed the distinctiveness of Jews as the Chosen People and underlined their kinship with Christians in the pursuit of preordained zeitgeist: “Newark Jewry will win the favor of Almighty God, if it puts its whole heart, in the best of spirit, into the Newark

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Beth Israel Hospital.”⁸⁹

Benefactors of the new Beth deployed more than verbal appeals to Newark Jews. On May 30, 1924, a full-page ad in the *Jewish Chronicle* invited Newark’s Jewry to support the efforts to move the Beth out of the Third Ward and into the modern, less urban Weequahic Section. Miss Beth (Figure 3.2), holding a model of the New Beth Israel Hospital, stood before her heart—the core of the Jewish community—and declared to readers of the *Chronicle* “My heart is with the Hospital.”⁹⁰ Miss Beth, dressed in a nurse’s uniform, stands atop a base bearing the question “Will You Help To Build The New Beth Israel?” Alan Kraut, in his history of Beth Israel Hospital, describes Miss Beth as a “lovely 1920s flapper.” While the trim tresses tucked underneath her nurses hat gives the air of the convention-defying woman of the post-World War I jazz age, Miss Beth spoke more to modern version of Jewish womanhood. As shall be seen later, this picture of Jewish womanhood became ever more present in Weequahic.

Miss Beth was a comely woman, yet her service to others signifies her femininity, not her sexuality. She wears heeled shoes, but her dress does not reveal the curvature of her body. Her apron, a prophylactic garment, obscures her form even more. Ever the nurse, she Miss Beth, according to Kraut, was the “modern woman campaigning for a modern hospital.”⁹¹ This modern woman was not fond of new clothes, cigarettes, or jazz. Her pursuits entail service, not leisure. This paragon of Jewish aspiration represented a modernity that “included the pursuit of good health.”⁹² This construction of Jewish

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “My Heart is with the Beth,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 30, 1924, 8. See Figure 3.2.

⁹¹ Kraut, 61.

⁹² Ibid.

femininity countered “Nativist literature... crammed with comparisons of sickly immigrants who wilted under the stress of economic competition against the robust physiques of,” full-blooded Americans.⁹³ Important to this construction of healthy womanhood is the place in which it would occur: the tree-lined streets of Weequahic.

The New Beth Israel would not be built in the Third Ward. Indeed, Miss Beth could not flourish in the Hill district. Underneath Miss Beth’s feet, the ad described conditions at the old hospital. It might as well have described conditions in the Third Ward itself: “There is no room. The wards are overcrowded. The beds are full.” Posing a rhetorical query that assailed the inadequacies at the old Beth and repudiated the overall environment in the Third Ward, the notice asked, “Could there be a more deplorable, a more wretched condition in a progressive community?” Miss Beth would find a home in pleasant environs of Weequahic.

Miss Beth, an exemplar of Newark Jewry’s progress, evokes the image of Miss Newark (Figure 3.3), the third prize-winning poster that commemorated the 250th anniversary of the city. A. E. Foringer’s painting is a Romantic work of a “stately figure,” a woman in flowing robes, “carrying attributes of industry and standing on a winged wheel of progress.”⁹⁴ Foringer weds images of beauty, progress, and industry into the mien of feminine grace. Like a halo radiating behind a 15th century Madonna, a cogwheel is embossed behind Foringer’s mother of progress. She does not hold the *Son of Man*, but other tools of salvation: a caduceus, the emblem of American modern medicine; a book symbolizes knowledge; and a torch of enlightenment. She stands upon the wheel of

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Committee of One Hundred *Official guide and manual of the 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of Newark, New Jersey, 1666-1916* (Newark, N.J.: Newark Sales and Advertising Company, 1916), 15.

progress with wings stretched wide between the years 1666 and 1916. The winged wheel brings to mind the growth of Newark from its colonial Puritan past to its modern industrial present. The wings, ostensibly those of an eagle, also suggest that Newark's narrative is an American one that is as old as the country itself. To be sure, Miss Beth is rather plain, rational, and modern, whereas Miss Newark grandiose, immoderate, and antiquated. Miss Newark is to be looked at, while Miss Beth works. Read together, Miss Beth does not supplant Miss Newark, but rather links the Jewish story of progress with that of the city, and counters the xenophobic narratives constructed by immigration reformers.

Newark Beth Israel opened its doors on February 18, 1928.⁹⁵ The Beth busted the block of Lyons Avenue and Osborne Terrace for Jews, despite resistant Gentiles. The facade of the skyscraper stood out on the highest point in the Southern section of Newark. The Beth, like the posh residences along Meeker Avenue, was set back from the street.⁹⁶ Kraut states that the new Beth was the “first ‘Jewish’ building in Weequahic, but would be quickly joined by others.”⁹⁷ This is not entirely true, as Jewish families were settling into Weequahic even before ground for the Beth was broken, as residents, proprietors, and congregants.

Weequahic's first synagogue was dedicated in March 1925 when Congregation Agudath Israel first opened its doors for service. There was evidence that Jewish congregations were already present in Weequahic as early as 1922. In November 1924, the *Chronicle* announced the “Weequahic section will have a new Hebrew school and

⁹⁵ For the full account of the Beth's move from the Third Ward to Weequahic, see Kraut, and Kraut, 61-77.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 80.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 73.

synagogue next spring.”⁹⁸ Congregation Tilfreth Zion had acquired a plot at the corner of Clinton Place and Nye Avenue. Tilfreth Zion was “organized and incorporated” in October of 1920 for the purpose of “conducting a Talmud Torah and a suitable place for holding services.”⁹⁹ The shul was not built until 1924. Four years before the synagogue and Hebrew school at 176 Clinton Place was dedicated, the congregants met in a smaller building at Nye Avenue and Hobson Street which was well within the Weequahic Section..¹⁰⁰ According to Gerald Gamm, Talmudic law states “a Jewish community can exist without at synagogue but not without a Torah scroll.”¹⁰¹ Worship could take place in a gymnasium, a theater, or even a home.¹⁰² “Members of the congregation need only themselves and a Torah scroll to initiate worship in a building,” says Gamm. As such, the absence of a dedicated building did not necessarily mean that Jewish congregants were not present in a community. They may have attended services at a synagogue in another part of Newark, or congregants could gather in a living room.

Jews, unlike Catholics who typically attend religious service in at their local parish, are not obligated to attend their local synagogue. As such, congregations with the resources to expand engaged in one-upsmanship in order to attract congregants by adding amenities to their buildings.¹⁰³ The addition of a Hebrew school, gymnasium, or even swimming pool could make a synagogue an all-inclusive and attractive community

⁹⁸ “New Synagogue For Weequahic,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 24, 1922.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Gerald Gamm *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 134.

¹⁰² Ibid., 126.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 123-124.

institution. “Unlike the Catholic church, the American synagogue is an essentially private institution organized for dues-paying members,” admits Gamm. Not all Jews could afford congregational membership dues. As such, some Jews elected to only attend synagogue during the High Holy Days. Smaller congregations and “so-called ‘mushroom’ synagogues,” sprouted up to meet the needs of observant Jews.¹⁰⁴ Before 1924, Jews in Weequahic went to synagogues in other sections of Newark for weekly services or to celebrate the New Year, but in September 1924, they had a newer, closer option when a new shul opened its doors on the corner of Custer and Peshine Avenues.¹⁰⁵

Congregation Agudath Israel purchased a three-story parochial school from St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church. The building was located in-between Elizabeth Avenue and Bergen Street in the upscale section of Weequahic.¹⁰⁶ The September 12, 1924 edition of the *Chronicle* announced that the congregation was under pressure to renovate the building so that services could be held there during the impending High Holy Days. Rosh Hashanah began at sunset on the 18th of September. Upon completion of all the renovations, the building would house a Hebrew school and a social center where Bible study and other classes would be held. The seventy-five by one hundred foot plot of land was large enough for an addition to be built onto the old school. That would prove necessary during the High Holy Days in 1927, when Agudath Israel reserved the Weequahic Theater, located on the corner of Bergen Street and Mapes Avenue, in order to accommodate congregants at a second service. Gedaliah Convissor,

¹⁰⁴ Gamm, 126.

¹⁰⁵ “Make Ready Agudath Israel Temple, Once Catholic School, For Holy Days,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 12, 1924.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

acting rabbi for Agudath Israel and principal of the religious school, was scheduled to preach at the synagogue and the Weequahic Theater.¹⁰⁷ “Capacity attendance appears to be the rule so far as synagogues are concerned –be they Reform, Conservative or Orthodox—when the High Holy Days make their bow,” the *Chronicle* observed in September 1927. Congregation Agudath Israel’s membership expanded so much that it occupied all seven hundred seats in the two-year-old shul. Retaining the Weequahic Theater allowed the congregation to host one thousand more celebrants for the New Year’s rituals. This was certainly a hospitable act to ensure that Jews could observe Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. But, according to Gamm, “Jewish congregations,” also, “depend heavily on the revenue that they raise from the sale of seats for High Holy Day services.”¹⁰⁸ Observant Jews were moving into Weequahic in greater numbers, and congregations like Agudath Israel vied for their membership. In late September 1927, Agudath Israel announced that it was “seriously considering enlarging its present edifice of worship.”¹⁰⁹ Other synagogues opened in Weequahic. Congregation Adas Israel Misnayas announced plans to construct a synagogue in the summer 1929 at a site on Osborne Terrace.¹¹⁰ Congregation Anshe Russia, which was located in the Third Ward at 224 West Kinney Street for twenty seven years, planned to build a synagogue at Schuyler and Shephard Avenues.¹¹¹ Ahavas Israel, a newly organized congregation, announced

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Gamm, 126.

¹⁰⁹ “Agudath Israel to Enlarge Synagogue,” *The Chronicle*, September 23, 1927.

¹¹⁰ “New Building Planned for Adas Israel,” *The Chronicle*, March 15, 1929.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

plans for a synagogue to be built at 403 Lyons Avenue.¹¹² “All three moves are being made because of the shift of the Jewish population to the Weequahic section,” noted the *Chronicle*.¹¹³ This shift was taking place for the better part of the decade.

Notices in the *Chronicle* informed Newark Jews that Weequahic was a safe place for consumption where, unlike downtown, they would find accommodating merchants. A month before the properties for the Beth were secured, an announcement in the *Chronicle* told readers, “Personal Service Is a Paramount Matter In the Weequahic Section.”¹¹⁴ Readers were informed, “There is an air about the section that makes the visitor, bent on shopping or just looking around, feel comfortable and at ease.” Why go downtown and experience and suffer indignities? Businesses in Weequahic were “filled with as wide an assortment of goods as can be found,” and Jewish patrons will recognize that they are “welcome to stay as long as one wishes and to purchase as much or as little as one chooses.”¹¹⁵ Ultimately, shopping in the stores along Bergen Street was prudent because, “you save money when you buy—‘In THE WEEQUAHIC SECTION.’”¹¹⁶ “Personal Service” is a potent allegory that elucidates three important factors in the development of the Weequahic Section.

¹¹² Ibid. It is not clear if Ahavas Israel is the same as Ahavas Israel Anshe Linitz, an older Orthodox congregation. Warren Grover’s history of Newark Synagogues (“Synagogues Definitely In Existence in 1923”, JHS) indicates that the congregation joined Young Israel in 1965. It is possible that the building at 403 Lyons Avenue never materialized as the market crashed in October of 1929 and precluded construction of the synagogue. Members of Ahavas Israel may have congregated in undedicated sites.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Service Is a Paramount Matter In the Weequahic Section,” *The Jewish Chronicle* February 6, 1925. A similar ad appeared in the *Chronicle* on February 13, 1925. Titled “Clinton Hill Offerings To Chronicle Readers,” the ad used the same text from the abstract on consumption in Weequahic, only substituting the referent Clinton Hill Section for the Weequahic Section.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

First, the notice highlights the fact that *Chronicle* editor Anton Kaufman and advertisers in the weekly paper grasped that there was a population shift in Newark. Mike Gold described as much in New York's Lower Eastside. "As fast as a generation makes some money, it moves to a better section of the city. At that time, the Jews with a little money were moving to the Bronx and to parts of Brooklyn."¹¹⁷ Some moved to Weequahic. Newark's Jewish families were migrating south, out of the Third Ward, and into Clinton Hill and Weequahic.

Second, it roused Jewish pride through an emphasis on personal service where one was made to feel not only welcome, but also like an individual. Personal service infers a form of engagement, an intimacy that runs counter to the disaffection of anti-Semitism and xenophobia inherent to postwar period. The "proprietor on the floor" that "lends an atmosphere lost in the great establishments in the heart of the city" was a Jew who welcomed the patronage of his or her fellows. Whether Orthodox, Reform, or Conservative, Jews required products and services that followed certain conventions of Judaism where the sacred and the secular were not entirely distinct. "One knows that one's needs are a matter of real concern; knows ... that above all it is desired to please him, to make him a regular, satisfied patron."¹¹⁸ The classifieds in the *Chronicle* revealed the preponderance of Jewish proprietorship. A recent homebuyer could walk to 830 Bergen Street in order to buy "paints and oils" from S. Rosen's General Hardware Company.¹¹⁹ By the winter of 1925, a Jewish woman could stop at 939 Bergen Street to drop-off dry cleaning at A. Stempler and Brother, and then walk to South Side National

¹¹⁷ Gold, 215.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Classifieds," *The Jewish Chronicle*, February 6, 1925, 8.

Bank and Trust company at 959 Bergen to deposit a check. From there she could walk to 92 Scheerer Avenue, which is at the corner of Bergen, and get her hair pressed at Steele's Beauty Parlor, and then on her way home stop by Brender's Fur Shop at 998 Bergen to pick up her red fox stole.¹²⁰

On January 22, 1926, ground for an entire block of stores on Bergen Street was broken.¹²¹ Social worker and realtor Michael Stavitsky brokered the deal. The two-story building, adhering to Bock's restriction of Bergen Street for commercial purposes, was constructed to house thirteen stores and four apartments for professional enterprises. The building's façade was "a cream-colored matt glazed terra cotta of Gothic design."¹²² The foyer and stairwells were adorned "in black and gold marble," and the public and private corridors were "of Mosaic tile." The building was designed with the panache of Weequahic in mind.

The building occupied what could be considered the center of Weequahic. Located at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Bergen Street, it was two blocks away from the future site of the new Beth Israel Hospital and it shared the square with the future site of the South Side National Bank. Stavitsky's realty group managed the property and, anticipating the profitable activity of the Lyons Avenue and Bergen Street corridors, procured two ten-year leases: a drug store for the first floor storefront at the corner of Bergen and Lyons and a dentist office on the second floor. Building appraiser Cuthbert Reeve commented, "Every office building depends upon renting the ground floor store rooms at a sufficient rental to capitalize the land investment and the building up to the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "Construction on Bergen Street Block is Started," *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 22, 1926.

¹²² Ibid.

second floor.”¹²³ Pharmacist Herman Springer provided that capital.¹²⁴ Income from second floor apartments did “little more than amortize their cost and pay for service and management.”¹²⁵ Rents on Dr. Milton Scheininger’s dental office subsidized the upkeep of the building. Stavitsky and other proprietors realized the investment potential in Weequahic as Russian and East European Jews from Newark’s Third Ward, as well as Jews from New York and rural New Jersey, sought bourgeois living on the fringes on Newark.

Neighborhoods like Weequahic provided the conveniences of downtown living without the downtown congestion. Allison Isenberg points out that 1920s married women, “were rational economic actors whose reasoning could be tapped in order to anticipate future,” commercial trends.¹²⁶ Clinton Avenue in Clinton Hill, and Bergen Street and Hawthorne Avenue in Weequahic were becoming “100% Locations” that mined the potential profit from foot traffic, namely women who shopped for themselves and their families.

Life and leisure columnist Ruth Roamer, in the December 7, 1923 edition of her weekly column for the *Chronicle* “Roaming with Ruth Roamer” noted the rapid growth in Weequahic. “Each winter sees less of the ‘White blanket of snow’ in Weequahic Park. More houses, less open space.”¹²⁷ Later in the column she highlighted the recent

¹²³ Cuthbert Reeves, “The Valuation of Business Lots in Downtown Los Angeles,” as quoted by Isenberg in *Downtown America*, 141.

¹²⁴ “Construction on Bergen Street,” January 22, 1926.

¹²⁵ Isenberg, 141.

¹²⁶ Isenberg, 122.

¹²⁷ “Roaming with Ruth Roamer,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 7, 1923.

Thanksgiving holiday, posing a query to her readers “How did you like the turkey?”¹²⁸ Nativist claims about Un-American foreigners ring hollow as her question is predicated on the fact that segments of the Jewish population actively participated in American traditions. She jokingly recognized that Jewish mothers, like their Gentile counterparts, were burdened with the business of bounty preparation for the fourth Thursday in November. “Many a house-wife is thankful at this season of the year that Thanksgiving comes but once a year.”¹²⁹ Her observations underscore the idea that middle class is less a fixed position and more of a process, or a set of exercises that occurred in spaces like Weequahic.

Ruth Roamer was actually the penname of an anonymous writer who joined the writing staff of the *Chronicle* in November 1922. She wrote for the Newark *Star-Eagle* under the name Margery Doon before lending her wit and panache to the Newark Jewish weekly. Her column purveyed, “interesting information,” and provided “comment on the local leading lights and social events.”¹³⁰ Roamer’s voice was a particularly middle-class feminine voice, as her commentary was aimed at a female readership that had a parlor to entertain friends and disposable income to shop for pleasure. The title of her columns alternated each week: “Roaming with Ruth Roamer” and “Shopping with Ruth Roamer”. “Roaming” recapped the going-ons in suburban Jewish neighborhoods. She talked charmingly about engagements and weddings; reviewed highlights from the latest awards dinner; and announced results from the sundry pinochle and whist contests in Weequahic homes. “Roaming” provided the stuff for kaffeeklatch and dinner conversation.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ “Chronicle Adds to Staff Former ‘Margery Doon’,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 10, 1922.

“Shopping with Ruth Roamer”, the alternate version of Roamer’s weekly column, detailed the pleasures of consumption in Newark. She provided a review of Newark’s merchant and specialty shops. More than a registry, “Shopping” told readers which stores were amenable to Jewish patronage and provided more bang for the buck. Additionally, Roamer persuaded her readers to spend their dollars in their neighborhood. Her narrative style spoke to the day-to-day of the middle-class reader, yet it was accessible to a poor and working class audience. In her first “Shopping” column, Roamer recalled an “afternoon, during the lull that usually follows a bridge game,” where she got into a discussion with “the women present,” where they talked about “permitting children to make purchases by themselves.”¹³¹ One woman “believed it was unwise to entrust to children the responsibility of buying some of their clothing,” while another woman countered that “she believed in giving children the knowledge of the purchasing value of a dollar.”¹³² After some discussion, the women “decided that that latter theory,” was more sound. Roamer then stated the importance of teaching children the value of a dollar: “The greatest knowledge in the struggle for material existence today is the real knowledge of the purchasing value of a dollar.”¹³³ This statement, more than a spur to save a dollar, described the means by which Weequahic and the Jewish community would grow. The purchasing value of a dollar, for Roamer, went beyond a new sweater or a hat. Dollars could be used to support the construction or expansion of a synagogue, aid the building fund for a new hospital, or develop business in a growing Jewish community. Realtors

¹³¹ “Shopping with Ruth Roamer,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 17, 1922.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

like Stavitsky established locations within walking distance of residential Weequahic in order to capitalize on a growing community of consumers.

Roamer's shopping tour began on Clinton Avenue. She rhetorically asked the reader, "have you noticed the great shopping district that is slowly but surely encroaching on what was formerly the residential section of Clinton avenue?"¹³⁴ Roamer maintained that her friends, the bridge playing ladies in-the-know, believed that it was not necessary to travel downtown to shop because one could "go out to Clinton avenue and find almost anything from a toothbrush to a gorgeous evening gown."¹³⁵ Roamer and the *Chronicle* were the media by which business leaders connected to a growing market of women shoppers and fostered the growth of residential community in Weequahic. Jews were moving into Weequahic in increasing numbers and comporting themselves to the régime of middle class living.

The early urban borderlands in Newark presented similarities to later suburbs. They were middle-class residences that provided retail corridors for residents to purchase and consume goods. Jews were present in these fringe communities despite discriminatory realty practices that sought to bar them from places like Weequahic. Jews were weaving themselves into American middle-class before the jingoism of the Johnson-Reed Act. In the Third Ward Newark ghetto, Jews created institutions to shield their fellows from the negative influences in Newark's poor neighborhood. Streetcar buildouts like Weequahic became middle class ghettos that provided conventions for second generation Jews to be ever integrated into the American social milieu, much like way the High Street "Y" served as an institution for transition and appropriation to first

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

and second generation Jews.¹³⁶ Movement into Weequahic allowed the Jewish community to distance itself from spaces of economic and social deprivation like the Third Ward. But it was complicated by the exigencies of racial discrimination that mandated the exclusion of African Americans from middle class residential spaces like Weequahic. Before the Great Depression, residential racial discrimination was a locally controlled procedure that was mandate chiefly by realtors and upheld by residential communities. By the end of the Great Depression federal policy and private capital would codify residential segregation.

¹³⁶ Hayden, 71.

CHAPTER FOUR

A TALE OF TWO GHETTOS Blight, Racialization, and the Growth of Jewish Weequahic and Black Newark

Harris: There is a tendency for Jews to get together and...

Rose Parsonnet: To live in ghettos. They've always lived in ghettos and that's the feeling. They still want to be together. I don't think they move deliberately where there are Jews.

Harris: I would debate that a little bit.

Rose Parsonnet: Well, just look at the history. They lived in the Third Ward and then they moved into the Weequahic Section. And then they moved up here.

[Millburn, New Jersey]

Harris: I just meant that, you say, the Jews lived in ghettos.

Rose Parsonnet: Well, they lived in ghettos because they were forced to do it. But I think they felt more protected to help one another.¹

Rose Parsonnet and her husband, Eugene, moved into their home at 608 High Street in August of 1923.² Gene, as Rose called him, completed his internship and practiced medicine at Newark Beth Israel when it was located in the Third Ward. The hospital moved to Lyons Avenue in Weequahic in 1928. Two years later the Parsonnets followed suit the after their second child was born. They initially rented a two-family home, but eventually found, as Rose Parsonnet recounted, “a house of our own.”³ It was a one-family house in the more upscale section of Weequahic on Keer Avenue.

The last chapter illustrated that the suburban exodus from Newark began in the late 19th century as wealthy businessmen established residences in the countryside.

Developers like Frank Bock developed neighborhoods like Weequahic for the middle

¹ Rose Parsonnet, interview by Jonathan Harris, September 16, 1986, transcript, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

² Wedding announcement of Rose Danzis and Eugene Parsonnet in “Social and Personal,” *Jewish Chronicle*, July 6, 1923.

³ Ibid.

class as well as skilled blue-collar workers. While Weequahic was a part of Newark, it was an alternative to the increasingly crowded central city neighborhoods. As Newark's older central neighborhoods continued to deteriorate and become even more unfavorable, less-urban spaces like Weequahic were deemed more desirable. The old Newark Third Ward was a Jewish ghetto, but by the mid 1920s Jews began moving en masse to the south, first into Clinton Hill, and then on to Weequahic, making their mark on the neighborhood, from its synagogues, yeshivas, and Beth Israel Hospital to its bakeries, kosher delicatessens. It was a Jewish community. Jews, Parsonnet remarked, "lived in ghettos because they were forced to do it. But I think they felt more protected to help one another," in those ghettos.

Across town, the former Jewish Third Ward increasingly became the African American ghetto, as the Johnson-Reed Act stemmed the influx of Europeans immigrants and Newark's Black population dramatically increased.⁴ From 1920 to 1940, the African American population in the Third Ward increased from 3,126 persons to 25,863, and even though there was a corresponding decline in Native and Foreign Born White population, there was no new construction in the area. African Americans created institutions to provide support for the increasing number of Black migrants, but the imprint of an organized community was obscured by federal assessments of desire. This chapter will look at the development of the Weequahic section from the late 1920s to the 1937. It will examine the ways federal housing policies defined the value of space using markers that privileged Whites and underprivileged African Americans, and the way field

⁴ According to the US Census, in 1920 there were 3,126 Blacks in the Third Ward. By 1930 that number increased to 11,947, and 25,863 in 1940. From 1920-1930, the number of Native White persons decreased from 17,531 to 8,405, and in 1940 to 6,231. Foreign Born whites also saw decreases over the same period, with 14,669 in 1920, 6,222 in 1930, and 3,247 in 1940. (1920, 1930, and 1940 United States Census)

agents read and misread the value of Newark's residential communities. This chapter will examine the ways in which of two ghettos in Newark.

The Weequahic Section that resounds in popular memory took shape during the Great Depression. The changes to Weequahic were the result of multiple processes that saw scores of Jews leave the Third Ward. Some moved south into Clinton Hill and onto Weequahic. Others leapfrogged Newark's outlying communities and went north into Nutley, Kearny, and Clifton, or west towards the Watchung Hills. They progressively moved out of Newark's Third Ward ghetto in pursuit of better housing. There was a desire for better living conditions.

Fall 1929

In the weeks and months leading up to Black Tuesday, there were interdependent signs of economic growth and decline in Newark. The Weequahic Section continued to grow as people, mostly Jewish, bought homes or rented apartments in Newark's 9th Ward. In early October of 1929, Gedaliah Convissor, principal of Agudath Israel's Hebrew School, commented on the growth in Weequahic, stating, "As is the case each year, there is a natural influx of more Jewish residents in the Weequahic section of the city, and these are concentrated in a goodly number of those blocks surrounding the synagogue."⁵ Located near Weequahic Park at the corner of Custer and Peshine Avenues, Convissor anticipated a forty-three percent increase in enrollment. This increase would require a concomitant increase in the school budget, as well as the expansion of

⁵ "Agudath Israel School Expands," *The Jewish Chronicle*, October 11, 1929.

facilities.⁶ While Weequahic's population continued to grow, Newark's older Jewish communities were losing their inhabitants and saw a subsequent decrease in consumer activity along the commercial corridors in the Third Ward.

Shopkeepers along Springfield Avenue saw their clientele absconding to Weequahic and took steps to hold on to the patronage of migrating Jews. The Springfield Avenue Merchants Association met and drew up solutions to address the loss of business wrought by outmigration. The members passed a resolution that would urge the city to create a crosstown bus line "beginning in the Weequahic section and ending in Bloomfield Avenue," Which was in the North Ward.⁷ Adolph Klein, who lived along the northern border of Weequahic on Hawthorne Avenue, presided over the meeting held at Katz' Restaurant, a Third Ward establishment along Belmont Avenue. Klein assigned the public relations committee to buy space in Newark newspapers "for the purpose of advertising the advantages of shopping in Springfield avenue," much the same way Clinton Hill and Weequahic merchants sold the perks of spending money in the southern districts retail corridors. The problem for the Springfield Avenue Merchants was not the lack of access to the Third Ward commercial districts. Jews shopped in Newark's southern communities because they lived there.

The demography of Newark's oldest Jewish community was changing. In 1920, 32,300 native born or foreign whites lived in the Third Ward, along with 3,126 Blacks.⁸ By the 1930, the total number of whites decrease to 14,627, while the number of African

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Springfield Avenue Merchants Seek More Transportation," *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 27, 1929.

⁸ 1920 US Census.

Americans more than tripled to 11,947.⁹ In contrast, the Ninth and Sixteenth Ward, which respectively comprised Weequahic and Clinton Hill, had an increase in the white population from 33,680 in 1920 to 44,812 in 1930. The African American population also increased, from 232 to 1,036, but this increase likely occurred in neighborhoods abutting the Third Ward. By 1940, the total number of whites in Weequahic increased to 49,619.¹⁰ 363 African Americans lived in Weequahic. It must be noted that a number of Blacks who lived in Weequahic at the time of the 1940 Census were live-in help.¹¹ Philip Roth described his neighborhood in the summer of 1940: “All were Jews.”¹²

The community was socioeconomically stratified. Class differences between families were reflected in the demarcated design of Weequahic. Bergen Street, running north to south through the heart of Weequahic, was a dividing line between the wealthier Jews to the east, and working class Jews to the west.¹³ Roth, in his fictional account of the early 1940s Newark *The Plot Against America*, casts such a picture when portraying Weequahic. He described,

⁹ 1930 US Census.

¹⁰ 1940 US Census.

¹¹ According to the 1940 Census, there is evidence to show that there were a few black families in Weequahic. It must be noted that in tract 47, which is closest to Weequahic Park, the black residents were more than likely live-in help. This can be gleaned from the fact that there are 29 Black females, two of whom are between the ages 15-19. Of the 4 non-white males, one is a child of 10-14 years old.

¹² Philip Roth *The Plot Against America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 2. Roth overstated the ubiquitousness of Jews in Weequahic. Jews were the majority of Weequahic's residents, but there were other “whites” in the neighborhood. Robert Snyder, his study of 1950s Irish Washington Heights, New York, cites a former resident who admitted to a skewed view of Irish totality: “At first, when the neighborhood was all Irish, it took me a long time to figure out that there were other people in the world besides Irish people.” See Robert W. Snyder “The Neighborhood Changed: the Irish of Washington Heights and Inwood Since 1945,” in *The New York Irish* ed. Ronald H. Baylor et al. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 445.

¹³ In the late 1950s, Lyons Avenue would also become a dividing line, as the homes North of Lyons were sold or rented to African Americans, and while homes South of Lyons were held for Jews, so as to maintain the racial composition of the communities within Weequahic. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The Jewish doctors and lawyers and successful merchants who owned big stores downtown lived in one-family houses on the streets branching off the eastern slope of the Chancellor Avenue hill, closer to the grassy wooded Weequahic Park.¹⁴

The “landscaped” Park, with its leisure spaces, the “boating lake, golf course, and harness-racing track,” served as buffer between the posh residences and the “industrial plants,” “shipping terminals,” “the Pennsylvania Railroad viaduct,” “the burgeoning airport,” and “the depots and docks of Newark Bay, where they unload cargo from around the world.”¹⁵ Roth calls the docks the “very edge of America.” He restates Frank Bock’s purposed design for Weequahic, but where Bock drew attention to Weequahic Park as buffer between the residential and industrial spaces, Roth’s description illuminates the synergy between white collar professional and industrialists; their sumptuous homes; their proximity to leisure; and the proximity to the hubs of commerce and consumption. Roth delineates the eastern edge of Weequahic as not just a reserve for single-family homes, but as a sub-matrix within Weequahic that was linked to sources of capital and power. It was a desirable location to live.

Roth’s family lived on the other side of Bergen Street. Therein, according to Roth’s in *The Plot Against America*, lived “the neighborhood men,” whose children might one day live on the eastern slope of Chancellor Avenue.¹⁶ These men were not on a board or in a corporate outfit. They were “the owners of the local candy store, grocery store, jewelry store, dress shop, furniture shop, service station, and delicatessen,” or they

¹⁴ Roth, 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

managed one of the “tiny industrial shops over by the Newark-Irvington line.”¹⁷ Some Jewish men were “self-employed plumbers, electricians, housepainters, and boilerman,” while others like Roth’s father an insurance man, “were foot-soldier salesmen,” who worked for commission.¹⁸ These men worked “fifty, sixty, even seventy or more hours” in a week, whereas “the women worked all the time.”¹⁹ Their labor included all domestic duties like cooking, cleaning, and childrearing, but they were also household managers “arranging for religious observances, paying bills and keeping the family books.” Some of the women worked with their husbands in family-owned shops. Few professionals lived in the western “parkless end” of Weequahic. Roth’s childhood home at Summit Street was located in a desirable section of Weequahic. Not every part of Weequahic was such. The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), the federal agency tasked with helping urban homeowners retain their properties saw Weequahic as a stratified community much the same way Philip Roth described. HOLC’s observations, more than verifying the conditions of the Weequahic properties, established the trajectory of future development in Weequahic and through the rest of Newark.

Appraising Desirability

The Home Owners Loan Corporation was part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal, a series of federal interventions that were implemented to alleviate the impact of the Great Depression on the American economy. The United States, beholden the protection of free market of capitalism, was in a dilemma. Pre-New Deal markets gave

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

private enterprisers the freedom to seek profits in an unregulated market, without concern for the needs of workers or the residual effects of speculation. Capitalism was in danger of collapsing on itself as American citizens lacked capital to fulfill their roles as consumers. Roosevelt and his advisors believed “they were addressing not transient disruption in the labor markets but a long-term, perhaps permanent, deficit in the ability of the private economy to provide employment for all who sought it.”²⁰ At stake was the extent of federal government largesse in the American economy and the role the state would play in private lives of American citizens.

From the outset, Roosevelt adhered to a policy of competing “as little as possible with private enterprise.”²¹ The federal disposition was the support of capitalism and the repudiation of communism. Roosevelt and his cabinet avoided socialistic- government intervention into the lives of American citizens by creating security. By far the most recognizable and prescient impact of New Deal policy was the creation of Social Security, as well as the Work Progress Administration. The New Deal supported state and private programs, rather than taking ownership of public utilities, infrastructure building, and maintenance. The New Deal did not “challenge the fundamental tenet of capitalism: private ownership of the means of production.”²² Historian David Kennedy states, “[A]chieving security was the leitmotif of virtually everything the New Deal attempted.” Roosevelt sought security for not only “vulnerable individuals,” but also “capitalists and consumers, for workers and employers, for corporations and farms and

²⁰ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear; the American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 249.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

²² *Ibid.*, 364.

homeowners and bankers and builders as well.”²³ The New Deal created the economic superstructures that buttressed the capitalist system, a system of interconnected relationships predicated on production and consumption. As such, the resultant patterns should be viewed as intentional, and the developments therein as part of larger processes of economic growth and expansion.

In June of 1933 Roosevelt signed into law the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC).²⁴ HOLC provided consumer protections by restructuring the home finance process. Before HOLC, the life of home finance loans was shorter, resulting in an unpaid balance at the end of the term and the need to refinance unpaid principal. HOLC loans, according to Jackson, were “fully amortized” and the loans could be repaid over a period of twenty years. The provision of loan monies to homeowners kept a roof over the head of home owning families and prevented the collapse of the housing market by helping homeowners maintain their investments. According to Jackson, HOLC provided “more than \$3 billion for over one million mortgages, or loans for one-tenth of all owner-occupied, non-farm residences in the United States.”²⁵ These interventions were not unconditional, as HOLC developed objective evaluation guidelines that were hardly unbiased. Through HOLC, the federal government established which residential neighborhoods were desirable to most Americans.

HOLC created a rating system to appraise residential neighborhoods. Residential Security Maps were created to “reflect graphically the trend of *desirability* in

²³ Ibid., 365.

²⁴ According to Kenneth Jackson, HOLC emerged from the President’s appeal to Congress to “pass a law that would protect the small homeowner from foreclosure, relieve him of part of the burden of excessive interest and principle payments incurred during a period of higher values and higher earning power, and declare that it was national policy to protect homeownership.” See Jackson, 196-197.

²⁵ Ibid.

neighborhoods from a residential view-point.”²⁶ HOLC field agents, with the assistance of bankers and real estate brokers prepared the Essex County Security Maps, and reviewed the appeal of neighborhoods in Newark. The evaluators considered the “age and typed of dwelling,” “social status of population,” “accessibility of schools,” “churches,” “shopping centers,” “transportation,” and “the restrictions set up to protect the neighborhood.”²⁷ Desirability was the measure of value. HOLC, by quantifying a specified set of structural qualities as either more or less desirable, claimed a significant amount authority. They dictated the parameters of consumer preference, and in doing so shaped the trajectory of residential development.

Weequahic largely comported to a criteria of desirability set forth in the Federal Housing Administration’s Underwriting Manual.²⁸ Frank Bock’s well-planned vision for Weequahic was consistent with FHA’s standards. Weequahic’s broad boulevarded streets, palatial homes, and uniform architectural designs met FHA zoning specifications. The Weequahic Park Tract possessed the “Natural or artificially established barriers,” that “prove effective in protecting a neighborhood and the locations within it from adverse influences.”²⁹ Weequahic Park, situated between the lavish homes above lower-class occupancy, and inharmonious racial groups.”³⁰ Elizabeth Avenue and the manufacturers along Frelinghuysen Avenue, effectively shielded the Weequahic Section

²⁶ Division of Research and Statistics of Federal Home Loan Bank Board and Home Owners Loan Corporation, “Essex County Security Map Folder” June 1, 1939. Emphasis added.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Federal Housing Administration, “‘Racial’ Provisions of FHA Underwriting Manual, 1936,” *Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure Under Title II of the National Housing Act With Revisions to April 1, 1936* (Washington, D.C.). www.wbhsi.net/~wendyplotkin/DeedsWeb/fha36.html#1 (accessed on March 3, 2013)

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

from “the infiltration of business and industrial uses, Weequahic could only retain their value if it continued, “to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.” The Underwriting Manual underlined the importance protection by delineating dangers of inevitable decline that accompanies class and racial integration. “A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values.” This decline is so inevitable that, “Once the character of a neighborhood has been established it is usually impossible to induce a higher social class than those already in the neighborhood to purchase and occupy properties in its various locations.”³¹ Field agents assessed communities based on nine criteria. They noted the demographics of a community, detailing the class and occupation of the residents; the percentage of “Foreign Families” and “Negro[s]” in the community; and whether the population was “shifting” or if there was “infiltration.”³² Other measures included detailed accounts of the structures, the number of new houses built and sold, and the number of properties in foreclosure. Field agents, through these assessments, gave communities grades that denoted whether a particular neighborhood was a desirable place to live, or not.

Levels of desirability were ranked by four categories with corresponding letters and colors.³³ “A”, green, or first grade communities were mostly “new”, “well-planned,” “not fully developed,” “and in demand during economically sound and unstable times. “B”, blue, or second grad communities were “as a rule completely developed.” Newark, surrounded by established municipalities, did not have open land to build more

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Neighborhoods were ranked first, second, third, and fourth with corresponding letters A, B, C, and D, and colors green, blue, yellow, and red. For a more detailed discussion of HOLC rating, see Jackson, 196-197. See Table 1. Also see Figure 4.1.

Area Description for Weequahic and the Third Ward Home Owners Loan Corporation, 1939								
Area Number								
	B-1		B-2		C-1		D-4	
	Weequahic		Weequahic		Weequahic/Clinton Hill		Third Ward	
I. Population								
a. Trend	Increasing Slowly		Static		Static		Static	
b. Class and Occupation	White Collar		White Collar		Mixed, White Collar, Skilled Mechanics, Labor, Estimated Income \$1200-2500		Labor, Estimated Income \$500-1500	
c. Foreign Families	High Class Jew		Jewish		50% German, Irish, Polish, Italian Descent, Jewish		20% Italian	
d. Negro	0%		0%		Nominal		70%	
e. Shifting/Infiltration	None		No Listing		None		Many on relief	
II. Buildings	Predominating 90%	Other Type 10%	Predominating 60%	Other Type 30%	Predominating 40%	Other Type 15%	Predominating 40%	Other Type 15%
a. Type and size	1-Family; 2 to 2½ Story	2-Family	2-Family	1-Family; 2 to 2½ Story	2, 3, 4 Family	1-Family; 2 to 2½ Story	2 to 4 Family	1 Family
b. Construction	Frame and Brick	Frame	Frame	Frame	Frame and Some Brick	Frame and a few Brick	Frame and Brick	Frame and Brick
c. Average Age	12-15 Years	12-15 Years	12-14 Years	12-14 Years	40 Years	40 Years	50 Years	50 Years
d. Repair	Good	Good	Fair to Good	Fair to Good	Fair to Poor	Fair to Poor	Very Poor	Very Poor
e. Occupancy	98%	98%	98%	98%	96%	95%	98%	98%
f. Owner Occupied	60%	50%	50%	60%	40%	50%	Nominal	Nominal
o. Rental Demand	\$75-80 Good	\$50-65 Good	\$45-55 Fair	\$65-75 Fair	\$30-35 Good	\$35-45 Fair	Good	Good
III. New Construction from 1938-1939	8 New Homes; One Family Homes \$9,000-18,000		No New Construction		No New Construction		No New Construction	
Lien Holder	HOLC	Institutions	HOLC	Institutions	HOLC	Institutions	HOLC	Institutions
IV. Overhang of Home Properties	25	300	110	600	75	400	73	600
V. Sale of Home Properties	4	65	12	200	7	90	12	100

Table 1. Home Owners Loan Corporation, Essex County Security Map Area Descriptions for Areas B-1, B-2, C-1, and D-4. *Source* Division of Research and Statistics Federal Home Loan Bank Board, June 1, 1939.

residential neighborhoods. Second grade communities “reached their peak,” and “remain desirable places in which to live.”³⁴ “C”, yellow, or third grade communities were marked by “age,” and “obsolescence.” They were communities in transition. They were marked by the “infiltration of a lower grade population,” “insufficient utilities,” and “poor maintenance.”³⁵ The undesirability of these communities, according to the field agents, is further evinced in the cheap rents that “attract an undesirable element.” “D”, red, or fourth grade communities are neighborhoods where the transitions of third grade communities became entrenched. Field agents assessed Weequahic in January of 1939. The assessment required that Weequahic be delimited into three areas: B-1, B-2, and C-1. For the sake of this study, B-1 and B-2 will be referred to as Lower Weequahic. C-1 will be referred to as Upper Weequahic.

Lower Weequahic

Lower Weequahic was composed of areas B-1 and B-2.³⁶ These communities were deemed desirable places to live. Per Philip Roth’s description, the “doctors, lawyers, and successful merchants,” whom HOLC field agents described as “High Class Jews”, lived in area B-1. Agents remarked that this was “a modern area,” and it was “inhabited chiefly by high grade Jews.”³⁷ HOLC appraisers noted the amenities of Weequahic, including “good transportation,” “schools,” proximity “to center of Newark,” and the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See Figure 4.1.

³⁷ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Area Description, Area B-1, January 1, 1939.

“large park.”³⁸ They also noted the recent “number of high class apartment houses,” that were recently built. This section of Weequahic would have received an “A” or green rating if not for the abundance of overhang, or foreclosed properties that are have yet to be sold. According to the field agents, it was a “quite a close question whether the rating should be first of second grade.”³⁹ The agents also noted the high number of foreclosures in the area. More, they also noted the large number of unsold properties, which drove down prices. Homes, which “ran as high as \$30,000 or more,” when they were built in the 1920s, fell as low as \$7,000 in 1935. There was small price increase in 1937, but in 1939 the prices fell as low as \$6,500. Despite the price fluctuations, this community of mostly one family, two to two-and-a-half story frame and brick homes was in good repair. Homeowners occupied over fifty percent of the properties in area B-1. The Parsonnet’s were homeowners in this area.

As mentioned earlier, Rose and Eugene Parsonnet moved to Keer Avenue in 1930, and raised a family on the quiet streets near Weequahic Park. Rose Parsonnet remembered, “There was a mixture of people, not all Jews.”⁴⁰ One of the Parsonnet’s neighbors was a German family, and their children “were in and out of each other’s house all the time.”⁴¹ Not all of the Parsonnet’s neighbors were Jewish when they moved into Lower Weequahic. Ethnicity was salient, but so was social class. Rose observed, “[O]n the block there were similar families.” The similarities, presumably, were social and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Parsonnet, interview.

⁴¹ Ibid., This does not contradict the field agents’ assessment, as Weequahic was a community that was in transition. HOLC’s survey of Weequahic was taken nine years after the Parsonnet’s moved to Keer Avenue.

economic. Rose admits that at that time she was not aware that Weequahic was distinctly Jewish, but as she recounts her circle of family and friends in the community she shows that in fact there was growing preponderance of Jews. She says:

I had relatives who lived on Goldsmith Avenue and we had friends who lived nearby. Friends who we had met originally when we lived in the apartment house in Newark... One of the couples was Dr. Arthur Heyman, who was a very well-known pediatrician... the others were Gene's brother, Tom Parsonnet, who was a lawyer in Newark... The other was Franklin and Ruth Halleck. They were both very active members in the Jewish community.⁴²

Her description of her circle of family and friends within Weequahic suggests that Jewish professionals peopled the mostly single-family homes nearer to the park, and that their numbers were increasing.

Indeed, her father, Dr. Max Danzis, was particularly responsible for the influx of medical professionals into Lower Weequahic. Dr. Danzis was a member of the New Jersey State Committee for Refugee Physicians, a "small group of doctors," who realized, "the tragic lot of the German refugee physician who as the result of an edict of a cruel and inhuman government were deprived of their right to practice, forced to emigrate and even denied the right of taking what capital and belongings they had."⁴³ In the advance of the persecutions that led to the death of millions of Jews, Nazi deprived lettered Jews of their abilities to practice their trades. Such persecutions led to the exile of Rabbi Joachim Prinz from Germany to the United States.⁴⁴ The purposes of the Committee for Refugee Physicians included providing internships for refugee graduates, securing positions

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Dr. Danzis Report Discloses the Notable Work Achieved by Refugees Physicians Committee," *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 4, 1940.

⁴⁴ Joachim Prinz, interview by Alice Shapiro, February 28 and March 7, 1985, transcript, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

within hospitals as they prepare for Board Examinations, assuring employment, and circulating “good-will among the American physicians towards this new group and to use all influence with various county societies to prevent them from passing certain rules and regulations discriminatory to refugee physicians.”⁴⁵ Some of the refugees were discouraged and did not practice medicine, but many successfully completed the program. Rose recalled that, “we never had to support these people. They were always able to look out [for] themselves.”⁴⁶ Dr. Danzis, who was eventually chosen to chair the National Committee for the Resettlement of Foreign Physicians, “was instrumental in bringing many physician and locating them in the community.” The nativist tenor of the 1920s was still strong, and many doctors feared competition for medical jobs. However, in 1940, “there was room for everybody. Newark was a big community and everybody did very well.”⁴⁷ Rose Parsonnet’s mother was president of the Council of Jewish Women, and they were responsible for getting the Board of Education to provide Americanization classes to immigrant women. These classes, as Parsonnet recalled, started out as “kitchen classes in her home.” Rose Parsonnet shared her parent’s philanthropic spirit. For two years she was chairperson of the women’s division of the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees and Overseas Needs (UJA) in Newark. UJA raised monies to aid Jews in Europe and Palestine. Serving the interests of the Jewish community was a family affair.

Another Lower Weequahic family was the Brodtkin family and they lived in area B-2. The Brodtkin home was a large two and half family home located at the corner of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Parsonnet, interview.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Lehigh Avenue and Osborne Terrace near Newark Beth Israel. Eva Brodtkin and her husband were medical doctors. Eva, New Jersey's first woman dermatologist, ran her private practice out of a home office.

HOLC field agents deemed area B-2 a desirable community. Composed chiefly of two-family homes, it was the most recently developed section of Weequahic. It was improved "by speculative builders and sold on small down payments."⁴⁸ Like in area B-1, many of the homes fell into foreclosure as residents struggled to accumulate income during the Depression. Banking and loan associations resold many of the homes at discounts of fifty percent or more, which was good for the consumers. Despite these market changes, agents found the area, "still a desirable neighborhood for a good class of Jews."⁴⁹ Eva Brodtkin's path to Weequahic did not pass through the Third Ward of Newark, but from rural environs of western New Jersey. Doctor Eva Brodtkin née Topkins was born in Brooklyn, New York on March 7, 1899.⁵⁰ Her father attended Long Island Medical College, and upon completion of his studies, the family moved to rural Califon, New Jersey, in Mercer County. Her maternal grandfather, who was originally from Warsaw, shepherded the first Jewish congregation in St. Johns, New Brunswick, Canada. He migrated from Europe to Canada. Her mother came to the United States sometime later. The Topkins' were not observant Jews. Recalling her discomfort with Jewish customs when she met her husband, Topkins recounted that her parents "were

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Eva Brodtkin, interview by Barbara K. Palmer, September 15, 1987, transcript, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection, New York Public Library, New York; Patricia Malarcher, "Eva Brodtkin," in *Past and Promise: Lives of New Jersey Women*, ed. Joan N. Burstyn (Metuchen, NJ; London: The Scare Crow Press, 1990), 244-245.

agnostics.”⁵¹ Her father was a local physician to the town, while her mother was a homemaker. Indeed, it was her mother who encouraged her to enter a profession rather than confine her ambitions to care for a home. She chose to pursue medicine like her father. Dr. Topkins was not initially supportive of his daughter pursuing a career in medicine, judging that “the long hours would be hard on a woman.”⁵² Dr. Topkins attempts to dissuade his daughter were unsuccessful. After graduating High Point High School Eva Topkins enrolled at Cornell University and graduated in 1920. She then entered Women’s Medical College in Philadelphia, where she earned an M.D. in 1924. While studying in Philadelphia, Tompkins went on a blind date with Henry Brodkin, who was studying medicine at Jefferson Medical School. There was a love connection and in September 1925 Eva and Henry were wedded in her hometown of Califon. In 1926 the first of their three children, Hyla, was born. The Brodkin’s moved to Irvington, where they went into general practice.⁵³ The Brodkin’s eventually moved to Weequahic. Brodkin recalled, “I remember very well the day we moved to the Weequahic Section from Irvington. It was the day of the crash in 1929.”⁵⁴

Eva Brodkin’s position as a doctor gave her experiences that were somewhat atypical for women in her generation, but she still had to meet the obligations of motherhood. The first woman dermatologist in the state of New Jersey, she worked as a medical professional in a distinctly male dominated profession when many of her peers were homemakers and teachers. Brodkin recalled socializing with a “group of doctors,”

⁵¹ Brodkin, interview.

⁵² Malarcher, *Past and Promise*, 244.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Brodkin, interview. The Stock Market crashed on Tuesday, October 24, 1929.

and “other friends that were in the Weequahic section.” She recalled that she would “walk around Weequahic Park every day and play golf down there, incidentally.”⁵⁵

Brodkin’s and her peers’ status as professionals afforded them indulgences that her working class neighbors had little time to enjoy, but she had to balance her professional obligations with her responsibilities to her family like so many mothers who were employed outside of their homes. Henry Brodkin helped change diapers and wash the babies, as Eva Brodkin was on call to deliver babies at Newark Beth Israel. To better meet her obligations to work and home, the Brodkins decided that Eva should pursue a specialty to practice out of a home office.⁵⁶

The United States entrance into World War II brought Brodkin’s leisure indulgences to an end, as her husband became a thoracic surgeon for the Army. “I played golf almost everyday. Then the war came and that was the end of that. I was too busy then.”⁵⁷ Eva Brodkin seemed to have lived the charmed life during the 1930s, but some Lower Weequahic residents struggled through the Depression. One such family was the family of Joel Jacobson.

The Jacobson family lived in section B-1 as well, but the economic downturns forced the family to become transient and move into section B-2. Joel Jacobson’s family moved to Weequahic around 1921. Before moving to Weequahic, his family lived on

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ From 1929 to 1931 Brodkin took classes five days a week at the Skin and Cancer Hospital in New York and then interned three days a week for another seven years. She passed her board examination in 1939. (Malarher, *Past and Present*, 245.)

⁵⁷ Brodkin, interview.

Charlton Street in the Third Ward of Newark.⁵⁸ Jacobson's grandfather managed Elving's Metropolitan Theater, the famed Yiddish theater in the Third Ward, which was located on Montgomery Street, around the corner from the Jacobson's Charlton Street residence.⁵⁹ His mother's family emigrated to the United States in 1896 from Kishinev, a city in the Russian empire. Jacobson's mother worked in the box office when she came to the attention of a young actor. Their romance did not last very long. They were divorced when Joel was one or two years old. After the divorce, Jacobson and his mother moved in with her parents and siblings to 126 Renner Avenue, which was located in section B-1.

Jacobson's entrance into Weequahic did not conform to Victorian standards of family. As Jacobson recalls "There were six kids in the family," and when his mother moved back home with Joel in tow. "I was really the seventh."⁶⁰ Their residence near the Park was brief because as each of his uncles or aunts got married, "the need to move and find smaller accommodations developed."⁶¹ Jacobson recalled that "we always had problems with money," and that "We were quite poor."⁶² Joel and his mother moved frequently within Weequahic. They lived at 29 Harding Terrace, then 321 Renner Avenue, and then 271 Schley Street. Each move took them further and further away from Weequahic Park, but they remained in Lower Weequahic, eventually settling in section B-2. The family continued to manage the theater during the Depression, but Jacobson

⁵⁸ Joel Jacobson, interview by Margery Cohen, March 3, 1987, transcript, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

⁵⁹ For the history of the Elving Theater see, Nat Bodian's "Newark's 3rd Ward Yiddish Theater: A Replica of NYC's Second Avenue," Old Newark Memories, www.virtualnewarknj.com/memories/thirdward/bodianyid.htm (accessed on August 18, 2013).

⁶⁰ Jacobson, interview.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

recounted “it never flourished.”⁶³ Because his family moved so often, Jacobson attended seven elementary and middle schools before entering high school.⁶⁴ Asked to recall the impact of the Depression on his neighbors, Jacobson recalled, “we were poor, but I never felt deprived.”⁶⁵ Jacobson’s recollection of the Depression does not reflect the experiences of most Newarkers, as tent towns were established in the Newark meadowlands to accommodate poor families. Hoovervilles were but one remedy to the social strife caused by the market collapse. That said, the Jacobson Family’s experiences raise questions about the ways in which the gradients of class were characterized during the Great Depression. Class distinctions do not follow simple classification of white collar and blue collar, but rather followed a more complex set of behaviors that included the type of employment, and activities like attending synagogue.

Transience was not uncommon amongst Weequahic Jews. Seymour ‘The Swede’ Masin, the real life inspiration for Philip Roth’s anti-hero in *American Pastoral* Swede Levov, also lived on different streets throughout Weequahic, including Keer Avenue, Aldeen Street, and Maple Avenue.⁶⁶ Robert Masin, the Swede’s son, speculated that, “Perhaps,” the Masins, “were trying to stay one step ahead of the law.”⁶⁷ For families like the Jacobsons and Masins economic instability did not preclude their ability to stay on in Weequahic. It quite possible that landlords, desperate for rents, were reluctant to evict

⁶³ Ibid. In 1944 the theater was sold to the director of the Peace Mission Movement founder and director, Father Divine; Bodian, “Newark’s Third Ward Yiddish Theater.”

⁶⁴ Joel Jacobson recalled: “I started off with Peshine Avenue School. Then I went to Hawthorne Avenue School. Then I went to Maple Avenue School, then I went to Bragaw Avenue, then I went to Charleton Street School which was the South Side Annex at the time, then Chancellor and then I went to South Side and then they opened up Weequahic and I went there.” Jacobson, interview.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Robert G. Masin *Swede: Weequahic’s Gentle Giant* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2009), 22.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

tenants who could pay only a fraction of rent. During his years at Weequahic High School, Joel Jacobson worked at a library to help make ends meet, and his mother worked as an interior decorator. One of his aunts worked at Bamberger's and another commuted to New York City to work. They found ways to preserve their place, and their status, in Lower Weequahic.

It bears repeating that HOLC field agents drew distinctions between Jews in Lower Weequahic. Families that lived closer to Weequahic Park in area B-1 were deemed "High Class Jews" whereas families living above the Bergen Street corridor were considered simply "Jewish", though further details in the report judged that it "was desirable for good class Jews," implying that B-1 was an exclusively high-class area and B-2 was a middle class area, albeit mixed. It is also worth noting that field agents in all likelihood were tasked to only consider homeowners and renters in their surveys, and not, more broadly, the occupants of each residence. Field agents for Lower Weequahic noted the percentage of Negroes in areas B-1 and B-2 at zero percent. Census takers in 1940 reported that the presence of Blacks. According to their surveys, of the 10,161 residents in the two census tracts that make up Lower Weequahic, and more specifically area B-1, 7,667 were native born white, 2,427 were foreign born white, and 65 were black, counting sixty-four Black women and only one Negro male. Holding the nuclear family unit of a father, a mother, and any number of children as constant; one can surmise that the great majority of African Americans that lived in those two census tracts were live-in help.⁶⁸ There were no African American property owners or renters in Lower Weequahic, which according to HOLC policy made it a desirable community.

⁶⁸ *U.S. Census, 1940*. The women in the two census tracts break down as follows: in Tract 47 there was one 10 to 14 years old; seven 15 to 19 years old; fifteen 20 to 24 year olds; seven 25 to 29; five 30 to 34 year

Through the 1930s Lower Weequahic became a reserve for Newark's Jews. Joel Jacobson remarked that he did not meet a non-Jew until he left Weequahic when he entered college, highlighting the extent of ghettoization in Weequahic. To be sure, ghettoization refers to the ways in which people, either forcibly or by their volition, cluster in a geographic space. There was a high degree of ethnoracial segregation. Lower Weequahic had become a Jewish cultural ghetto, where Jews, according to Rose Parsonnet, "felt more protected to help one another."⁶⁹ Structurally, Lower Weequahic was a modern community. Its housing stock, as well as the neighborhood amenities like Weequahic High School, were newly constructed buildings. In contrast, Upper Weequahic was an older community. In contrast to the Lower Weequahic communities, the field agent's assessment of Upper Weequahic was less optimistic.

Upper Weequahic

Field agents assessed that the Weequahic's northern neighborhoods that abutted Clinton Hill were less desirable than the residences in Lower Weequahic. Upper Weequahic shared many of the amenities with Lower Weequahic, including proximity to downtown Newark. Parents sent their teenage children to Weequahic High School, one of the city's premier schools. Upper Weequahic differed from Lower Weequahic because the former was not an exclusive enclave of the middle class. Indeed, Bock designed it as such. Status in this Upper Weequahic was described as diverse. Field agents labeled

olds; two 40 to 44 year olds; four 45 to 49 year olds; and one 55 to 59 year old. In Tract 49: four 15 to 19 year olds; five 20 to 24 year olds; four 25 to 29 year olds; three 30 to 34 year olds; three 35 to 39 year olds; one 45 to 49 year old; and one 50 to 54 year old.

⁶⁹ Parsonnet, interview.

workers in this neck of Weequahic as “White Collar, Skilled Mechanics,” and “Labor.”⁷⁰ This was the community of the “neighborhood men,” that Roth described, the community where the men worked “fifty, sixty, even seventy or more hours a week,” and the women “worked all the time, with little assistance from labor saving devices,” that were indicative of the more modern homes in Lower Weequahic.

There were a varied assortment of single family, and multifamily homes, but the predominant structures were apartments and multifamily tenements, and the average age of the buildings was forty years and required various levels of repair. Field agents categorized Upper Weequahic, as well as Clinton Hill, as neighborhoods in transition. They observed it was “neither slum nor good.”⁷¹ It was a valuable residential space for “those of modest income,” but Clinton Hill and Upper Weequahic, had “passed its peak” and was “definitely on the down-grade.”⁷² It was a residential community with an economically diverse population, but a nominal percentage of Negroes also lived in the community. Per the 1936 Underwriters Manual, field agents were advised that, “A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values.”⁷³ Moreover, the Manual posited the inevitability of decline, and indeed cast living space as pseudo-biological, asserting that moribund residential spaces were irredeemable: “Once the character of a neighborhood has been established it is usually

⁷⁰ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Area Description, Area C-1, January 1, 1939.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ FHA, *1936 Underwriting Manual*, 22.

impossible to induce a higher social class than those already in the neighborhood to purchase and occupy properties in its various locations.”⁷⁴ Once its is sick, it is terminal.

It is worth repeating that HOLC collaborated with local bankers and real estate brokers when preparing security maps, and many of these men did not live in Newark. They lived in suburban Essex County. Newark historian Paul Stellhorn problematizes the political power resting in the hands of businessmen in his study of Depression Era Newark. Their interests in the city did not extend beyond their jobs or their real estate interest in the city. Stellhorn discerned that, “The city’s largely nonresident business community no longer thought of Newark as a ‘home,’ but as the location of its business operations--an increasingly hostile location at that.”⁷⁵ “The elite took increasingly negative attitudes toward the city in general, and few of its members concerned themselves with Newark’s long-range development.”⁷⁶ The impact of Newark’s business elite on housing development will be discussed in the next chapter. Clinton Hill and Upper Weequahic were “close to the business center of Newark,” and field agents felt it would be “subject to the pressure exerted by expanding commercial and attendant slum areas.”⁷⁷ The area was the Third Ward.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Paul Stellhorn, “Depression and Decline: Newark, New Jersey: 1929-1941” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1982), 253.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Area Description, Area C-1, January 1, 1939.

Transitions in the Old Third Ward Ghetto

Field agents gave Newark's Third Ward, the home to many Jews and a growing population of African Americans, a grade of "D". In the years before HOLC field agents surveyed the city's central residential and business community, there were multiple reports attesting to the conditions in the Third Ward. These reports testified to the obsolescence and poverty in the community, but they also carried a discourse that linked together poverty, the growth of the slums, and increasing presence of African Americans.

The May 23, 1937 edition of the *Newark Sunday Call* trumpeted this discourse with a front-page article that surmised that the Third Ward would deteriorate into notorious ghettos like Harlem, Chicago's South Side, or San Francisco's Barbary Coast.⁷⁸ The article posited that the Third Ward, in contrast to the rest of Newark and the surrounding suburbs, was an undesirable place to live. The headline picture juxtaposed two images from the Third Ward under the caption, "Depicting Clash of Third Ward's Destructive and Constructive Forces" (See Figure 4.2). The first picture is the rear view of a dilapidated two-story tenement with a flat roof. In the foreground is a heap of trash high enough for rodents and vermin to make a home. The trash is piled before a fence of weather beaten plywood boards. Next door to the tenements is a smaller building with a gabled roof. The neighboring structure is so close that it leaves little room for light or fresh air to pass between the buildings. This is the picture of blight, a "destructive" force.

Underneath the picture of undesirability is a picture of six black children. The six boys appear to be three to four years of age. They are sitting around a table. Some of the boys hold cups in front of them, and others have what appear to be beaded necklaces that were assembled during arts and crafts. Two of the boys gaze at something off camera,

⁷⁸ "Third Ward a Growing Problem If Ignored, Warning to Newark," *Newark Sunday Call*, May 23, 1937.

while four stare curiously at the cameraperson. The boys are in a Third Ward nursery, and this is the constructive force in the Third Ward. In contrast to the picture of the slum dwelling, the picture of the young boys suggests that there were secure places that attended to the needs of children and shielded them from the influences of ghetto. There is a greater implication. While this image attempts to invoke sympathy for the young boys, their portrait juxtaposed with the images of obsolescence might well invoke repugnance.

One picture contextualizes the other, and, when read with the accompanying article, impresses upon the reader the notion that Negroes are an inharmonious racial group. The innocent eyes of the children may invoke sympathy, but their home environment symbolized by the dilapidated tenement, does not. In the opening paragraph *Sunday Call* readers are reminded that, “Resident’s of Newark other 15 wards, knowing,” the Third Ward, “as a ‘problem ward,’ have been inclined to shrug their shoulders and comment that ‘nothing that happens in the Third Ward is surprising.’”⁷⁹ The Third Ward was a bastion of dysfunction. “Residents of suburban communities, reading about the *unconventional* goings-on in the Third ward, profess to be shocked that the citizenry of a great city would permit such conditions to endure.”⁸⁰ What becomes very apparent is that the writer did not probe the political and structural roots of this crisis. The writer highlights a number of factors that point up to the problems in the Third Ward, including the concentration of African Americans in dilapidated residences, the Third Ward Mob, and egress of Jews. Indeed, the retention of Jewish population was cited as a means of mitigating the communities decline. “There have been sporadic attempts to bring back

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Emphasis added.

some of the Jewish residents who helped develop the section,” and support “Prince Street and its push-cart peddlers,” as well as the “fading Metropolitan Theater, with its Yiddish dramas.”⁸¹

The Third Ward Mob, which was led by Abner “Longie” Zwillman, held sway over Third Wards criminal enterprises. Zwillman’s activities did not create an environment conducive to communal growth, yet, in the gaze of the *Newark Sunday Call* Zwillman’s contributions to the Third Ward social degradation and disrepute did not rank the influx of African Americans.⁸² Zwillman flouted the Volstead Act, also known as the Prohibition Act, and amassed a fortune bootlegging liquor up and down the east coast. His influence was such that he was one of the founding members of a nationwide crime syndicate that included the likes of Alphonse “Scarface” Capone and Salvatore “Lucky” Luciano. Zwillman took care of poor Jewish families. Weequahic resident Joel Jacobson remembered that during the holidays, “people would find baskets of food that Longie brought them.”⁸³ Despite his incorrigible activities, including racketeering, extortion, and murder, Zwillman maintained a good reputation amongst residents of Weequahic. Jacobson recalled that Longie “was such a legend, that when you were sitting in your own house,” the adults, “started to talk about him, they would whisper his name.”⁸⁴ Zwillman was a public figure, yet the *Newark Sunday Call* neglected to mention his name as the leader of the Third Ward Mob. The writer simply stated that the man rated as

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² For a history of Longie Zwillman, see Warren Grover’s *Nazis in Newark* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 39-47; also see Tuttle’s *How Newark Became Newark*, 97-103.

⁸³ Jacobson, interview.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

“United States Public Enemy No. 3,” by the Federal Bureau of Investigation,
 “Incidentally, makes his home in East Orange.”⁸⁵

The writer bookends this article with discussions about the Negro problem. The problem began “since the World War days.”⁸⁶ Forty-three percent of Newark’s Negroes lived in the Third Ward. The writer points out that “Seventy-five per cent of these Negroes were born in the rural South,” suggesting that the wretched conditions of the Third Ward Negro is due to some character handicap. This idea of ill-bred Southern blacks would remain salient through the 1960s. The writer compounds this assertion with a sociological reading of Blacks, stating that the Negro is “fundamentally a happy individual,” that likes to sing and laugh. Playing up long standing stereotypes of Southern blacks, the writer claims that there is “utter contentment in the faces of Negroes buying their hogmaws and chittlings in Third Ward shops.”⁸⁷ Playing up this theme of happiness in the face of suffering, the author contends that “bemoaning his plight is not typical of the Third ward Negro.” What is more “typical” is “an innate sense of humor and the faculty to sing in time of trouble.” The article casts African Americans as a group inadequately suited to living in spaces outside of the Third Ward. Long-suffering and contented, Negroes seem at home in the midst of such squalid conditions. The article focused on the social factors for the decline of the Third Ward.

A June 19, 1938 piece of yellow journalism in the *Newark Call* explored voodooism in the Third Ward. “Voodooism in the Fourth precinct is a corrupted variety

⁸⁵ “Third Ward a Growing Problem,” May 23, 1937.

⁸⁶ Ibid. For a reading on media constructions Black deviance and its political utility, see Khalil Muhammad’s *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁸⁷ Another article provides insight into the peculiar food culture of Negro residents in Newark’s Third Ward. “Southern Cooking in Third Ward,” *Newark Call*, December 12, 1943.

that would make the ancient witch doctors of West Africa turn in their sacred graves, and it is far less colorful than the black magic ceremonies practiced in Haiti and the French quarter of New Orleans.”⁸⁸ At a time when European immigrants were being folded into the American social strata and becoming white, the *Newark Call* conjured foreign, exotic, and *dark* places to contextualize African Americans pre-modern practices. While most residents of the Third Ward were suspicious of voodoo, the writer contended that “superstition persists, and the herb business persists.”⁸⁹ Such practices were a “health menace”, as “believers” sought healing herbs and rituals rather than proper medical attention. The writer, lacking perspective on the African American experiences through slavery and Reconstruction failed to account for migrant Blacks’ distrust of institutional medicine.⁹⁰ Moreover, the *Newark Call* does not account for the poor treatment Blacks received at Newark area hospitals. Last, the *Call* fails to situate the crowded and squalid environment of the Third Ward as a contributing factor to the higher incidents of tuberculosis, whooping cough, as well as infant mortality. Newark’s newspapers and HOLC zoning maps failed to account for complexities in Black life in the Newark and the impact of obsolescence on the lives of African Americans in the Third Ward.

Curtis Lucas’ aptly titled novel *Third Ward, Newark*, provides insight into the life of African Americans in the community known as the Hill, a predominantly African American section of the Third Ward. Very little known about Lucas. Originally from

⁸⁸ “Voodooism Thrives in Newark Third Ward,” *Newark Call*, June 19, 1938.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Lawrence Levine in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* notes “Slaves often had reason for their lack of trust both because in many areas of medicine white knowledge and remedies were egregiously faulty and because there is evidence that some white doctors used ailing slaves for experimental purposes. (457, n24)” Such suspicions were not off. In 1932, the Public Health Service conducted the “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in Negro” which tracked the progression of the disease. 399 men with syphilis were told they were being treated for “bad blood”, but in actuality did not receive proper treatment.

rural Georgia, he migrated to Newark in 1946 and worked in a factory. His novel was published in 1946. Lucas maintained that that The Hill “is a slum area, and blighted.”⁹¹ Blighted and slum does not tell the entire story, as the “characters of the Hill are as varied as they come: strong men, weaklings, frustrated wrecks, religious-minded folks, and vicious fellows.” In addition, there were “Beautiful young girls, and old hags; fortunate, well-kept women, and debased hustlers.”⁹² Through the plight of his characters, Lucas details the structural impediments to upward mobility of aspiring Negroes and complicates the simplistic characterizations of Black folk. In the opening scene of the novel the reader is immediately confronted with the problems facing the residents of the Third Ward. A teenage girl named Hattie reads a sign that was hung on the house next door to hers. It read: “THIS BUILDING IS UNSAFE AND UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION. OCCUPANCY IS DANGEROUS AND FORBIDDEN BY LAW.” Sarah Brown, Hattie’s aunt, explained to Hattie that sign meant the house was in poor condition and that it was being condemned. Hattie observed that the condemned house looked just like the one she, Aunt Sarah, and her cousin Wonnie lived in. “Our house ain’t much good either,” Aunt Sarah replied. Lucas tells of story of people adapting to their circumstances that are beyond their control, and in the process he shows how they preserve their humanity despite their wretchedness of their environment.

Lucas uses black femininity to point out the depravity of white racism and exploitation. The main character is Wonnie Brown, an orphan whose mother, Sarah passed away after a brief illness. Aunt Sarah worked as a maid to a white woman in the township of Orange, a suburb of Newark. Aunt Sarah took ill and eventually died after

⁹¹ Curtis Lucas, *Third Ward Newark* (New York: Lion Book Incorporated, 1952), 5.

⁹² Ibid.

her employer required that she clean the exterior windows in the wintertime. Hattie, Wonnie's cousin, became Wonnie's guardian after her Aunt Sarah passed away. Underpaid by her Aunt's former employer, and unable to secure credit from grocers by asking, Hattie began to comprehend the sway of sexual power on men. "A smile at the grocery man got her credit, where all her promises to pay on Saturday had failed. She learned fast."⁹³ Hattie was eventually reported to the vice squad, and caught "in a house... with a white man."⁹⁴ Wonnie eventually came under the stewardship of Mildred, who like Hattie, promised to take care of Wonnie. Like Hattie, Mildred used her feminine wiles to beguile men and get money from them, but unlike Hattie, she did not sleep with them. She told Hattie, "It's easy. All you got to do is promise some sucker you'll be nice to him. Then, when he gives you money, just cut out on him. That's all."⁹⁵ Mildred was Such power was limited, as white men who cruised around looking to "pick up some nice colored girls," assumed that all black women were accessible. Wonnie and Mildred were headed home when two white men kidnapped them, and in the attempt to rape the two girls, murdered Mildred. Wonnie escaped the attack, but was left for dead and scarred by her ordeal. Lucas criticizes white racism through his critique of the ways in which White men exploit Black women and negate their femininity. This discrimination is intimately tied to wretched condition of the Third Ward.

Lucas separates the Negro from the conditions of the Third Ward and dispels long-standing assumptions about the depravity of African American residents. Wonnie, after her ordeal meets Joe Anderson, an African American man who migrated to Newark

⁹³ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 16.

from Georgia and worked at the Naval Yards. Lucas introduces Joe on Sunday morning, when:

The Hill wore its Sunday morning air of solemnity; the quiet serenity was like a Sunday suit that had been put away during the work-a-day week; like some finery that might be spoiled by all the grime, all the vileness, the evil and the lust that the slum district wallowed in during the six weekdays.⁹⁶

Joe was easy like a Sunday morning. His southern-ness was his polish and shield, and this made him appealing to Wonnie. She liked the way he talked, “so slow and unconcerned.”⁹⁷ More she was enthused by his plans to find a wife and to open a grocery store. Lucas casts southern Joe as a paragon of Victorian masculinity, as he wants to marry a woman and have ownership over his labor.⁹⁸ To be sure this notion of masculinity can be inimical to the women, as it calls for a femininity that is deferential to men, but Joe Anderson’s dreams of family and work are in keeping with White, mainstream notions of masculinity. The mom-and-pop shops along Bergen Street in Weequahic bear out the possibility of ownership. Unfortunately, Joe and Wonnie live in the Third Ward and are faced with the imposed limits of place. Hattie provided a reality check: “Listen, kid, you won’t have a chance. White men own all the buildings up here, and they look out for their own. Colored men can’t get the right locations most of the times, and they can’t get the right contact with wholesalers.” Hattie’s criticism is stinging, but it illustrates the structural barriers that African Americans ran up against.

Lucas casts the impediments to Black upward mobility in stark relief through his depiction of Wonnie and Joe’s living conditions. Joe rents a room inside a brothel, and

⁹⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

despite their best efforts to find a different place they are unable to move. The Hill is overcrowded and has no vacancies, and they are refused apartments inside the surrounding white neighborhoods. Joe's co-worker and friend Mary, a white woman that works at the naval yard, unsuccessfully tries to find Joe and Wonnies an apartment in her neighborhood, as she is rebuffed by building managers when they find out Joe and Wonnies are Negroes. Mary, in frustration, declares, "No two people in the world ought to be forced to live in a bawdyhouse, when there are vacant apartments for rent. It's not right."⁹⁹ Though a work of fiction, *Third Ward Newark*, Lucas captured the complexity of problems that confronted Black residents of Newark's Third Ward, including racial segregation and substandard accommodations.

Newark's chief health officer Charles Craster connected poor structural condition of the Third Ward to the higher incidences of health problems. He cited a 1937 City Health Department survey that showed that "slum conditions, overcrowding, bad housing, etc., were more generally present than in other parts of the city."¹⁰⁰ The survey also revealed that seventy percent of the buildings were built before 1902; eighty percent were infested with rats, mice, and vermin; ninety-four percent had sanitary violations; and the "great majority" of the housing lacked "baths, private indoor water closets, or central heat."¹⁰¹ Such conditions were conducive to higher incidents of tuberculosis and "all the other major epidemic diseases."¹⁰² Craster furthers his structural analysis of

⁹⁹ Curtis Lucas *Third Ward*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Craster, "Slum Clearance: The Newark Plan," *The American Journal of Public Health*, (September 1944), 936.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

health disparities in Newark by comparing the Newark's slums with "its sunbathed residential districts." The higher frequency of poor health and mortality in the Third Ward and attendant slums was offset by the lower incidents of disease in Newark's "better residential districts,"¹⁰³ thus creating a mean rate of health that was "not truly representative of the health of a population in every part of the city." Craster concluded that slum properties that could not be remodeled be razed and new residential properties built. Properties that could be remodeled should "meet modern standards of house construction."¹⁰⁴ Such construction or repairs were all but proscribed by municipal decree. The *Newark Call* articles did not account for the statutory causes of decline.

Newark's Municipal leadership all but ensured that the Third Ward would not develop as a residential community. Indeed, zoning ensured that residents in communities like Weequahic would be sunbathed while residents in Third Ward sequestered in the darkness of undesirability. Newark was one of the first cities to implement zoning in 1920.¹⁰⁵ The Board of Commissioners zoned the Third Ward as a business district. The zoning policy stipulated that only structures "generally having non-residential purposes," could be used or built.¹⁰⁶ Residential properties retained their purpose, but there was no new residential construction to accommodate the influx of migrants or to rehouse residents that lived in substandard housing. The assessment criteria for municipal zoning

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 940.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Alexander, "The Masterplan of Newark, New Jersey," *American Planning and Civic Annual* (Harrisburg, PA: J.Horace McFarland Company, 1948), 134.

¹⁰⁶ Clement Price, "The Afro-American Community of Newark, 1917-1947" (PhD diss, Rutgers, 1975), 57-59; Board of Commissioners, *Building Zone Ordinance of the City of Newark, New Jersey* (Newark, NJ: Colyer Printing Company, 1920).

in Newark prevented new residential construction in the Third Ward. Additionally, the zoning ordinance divided Newark's residential communities into five types of areas "which were distinguished by their housing standards, lot size, and the number of families that could be housed on an area of land."¹⁰⁷ This policy presaged and coincided with HOLC's measures of desirability.¹⁰⁸

HOLC field agents' survey of the Third Ward found that indeed there was little to no development in the Newark's oldest residential community. They gave it the lowest rating of a "D". Forty-five percent of the residential structures were "tenements and low-grade flats." The average age for the structures was fifty years. Field agents wrote that the Third was "Newark's worst slum section."¹⁰⁹ They also noted that this area, which was seventy percent Negro, was an area of "minimum values and useful only to those in lowest income brackets who need to be in walking distance of work." To be sure, these accommodations were less than standard. Many of the tenements were in serious disrepair and lacked indoor plumbing. There was a shortage of adequate housing.

HOLC assessment standards would have far-reaching implications for the city as it delimited the growth of residential communities. The use of race as a determinant all but guaranteed that black communities would be underdeveloped. As Newark's Black population increased, neighborhoods in Newark, according to federal housing standards,

¹⁰⁷ Price, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Price says, "The entire zone ward was zoned as a B district, in which rear yards, side yards, inner courts, outer courts, and building areas were relatively limited in size. The B districts were also distinguished by their relatively higher population density – 140 families per acre of land, in comparison to 105, 35 and 25 families per acre in the C, D, and E districts respectively." (58) HOLC's measures considered "age and type of dwelling," as well as restrictive covenants, or "the restrictions set up to protect the neighborhood." Neighborhoods that were ranked high by the Board of Commissioners were also ranked high by HOLC field agents.

¹⁰⁹ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Area Description, Area D-4, January 1, 1939.

were in danger of invasion. Federal housing policy substantiated the devaluation of Black residential space, but it also justified the exclusion of African Americans from all-White private and public neighborhoods.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIBERALISM WITHOUT PROGRESSIVISM New Deals and Disinvestments in Residential Newark

This chapter will examine the impact of federal housing policies on Newark. The Federal Housing Act of 1937 provided affordable housing to poor and working class Americans. This policy did not directly impact Weequahic, however the political wrangling over the direction of the Newark Housing Authority would have consequences for every section of Newark, most especially Weequahic. The 1937 Housing Act led to the creation of the Newark Housing Authority, a bureaucracy given the charge of building public housing in Newark. NHA received monies from Washington to construct low-income housing. Federal subsidies were a golden apple that proved too tempting to resist, and Newark's business community sought control over the direction of NHA and with it, greater influence over a city reeling from the Great Depression.

The increased production of war industries induced scores of African Americans in pursuit of better economic opportunities and greater freedom to migrate from the rural Jim Crow South to the northern cities. They found few job opportunities in northern factories, and were sequestered to oldest sections of the city like Newark's Third Ward. These communities were once the "port of entry" for previous generations of immigrants to the city. Whereas the first decades of the 20th century saw progressives investing time, money, and hope in the city residents, the middle of the century was marked by liberalism without progressivism, support of economic growth absent the social reforms to fully redress structured inequalities.¹ Michael Stavitsky and Harold Lett were two

¹ Robert O. Self describes "liberalism as it came to be constituted in the American polity between the end of World War II and the late 1970s meant four things: (1) New deal liberalism, its institutions, and its

appointees to the newly commissioned Newark Housing Authority. Their efforts to meet the needs of all Newarkers were obstructed by Newark's business elite who co-opted liberal practices for their own ends.

The Wagner-Stegall Act, also known as the Housing Act of 1937, was signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in order to alleviate the lack of affordable housing for low-income and poor Americans. The United States Housing Authority (USHA) provided loans, subsidies, and supervision to local housing authorities that would be responsible for determining the location of public housing accommodations.² Municipalities in need of affordable housing were tasked with creating local housing authorities to oversee the planning, construction, and administration of public housing projects in cities.

There were significant compromises made to the original act. Private developers and real estate interests like the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) did not welcome federally subsidized housing for fear of competition. While FHA helped stimulate the market for middle class housing, there was no concomitant increase in low-rent housing. Private builders did not build housing for Americans struggling through the Depression. There was no profit in it. Washington's monetary largesse appeared quite

commitment to a modified welfare state; (2) moderate market regulation in the interests of the middle and working classes, largely white, in the context of continued economic growth; (3) racial liberalism, that is, racial equal opportunity in social and political life, as well as some state intervention to achieve an "equal playing field"; and (4) individualism, the belief that society and politics, as well as reforms and government policies, should be organized around people rather than groups or classes." (14) Self examines the "deep contradictions" in liberalism. I draw from this idea conflict, positing that Newark's business community deploys liberalism absent the social reforms that would have benefitted the growing population of African Americans that called Newark home. More, the persistence of limited liberalism would undermine the possibility of an interracial community in Weequahic, as will be seen in the last chapter. See Self in *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press).

² Jackson, 224.

formidable, and federal interventions into the housing market, in the view of profit minded, was nothing short of socialism.³ Their apprehensions were particularly insincere because Roosevelt adhered to a policy of competing as little as possible with the capitalists when crafting the New Deal. New Deal policies, while socialistic, kept the wheels of the free-market greased by ensuring that American consumers had liquid capital to spend. This was New Deal liberalism.

There were other factors that limited the effectiveness of the Housing Act of 1937. Construction of low-rent housing was “voluntary”.⁴ Local administration determined the need for affordable housing. Many suburban municipalities had open land on which units could be built, but chose to maintain the *character* of their communities as solely a private housing market. Urban centers like Newark did not have many open parcels of land, and would have to raze older, obsolete structures. The legislation contained an equivalency clause that mandated housing authorities construct an equal amount of units for every cluster of units that were demolished. Cities were responsible for fitting the bill for clearance. This provision increased the overall cost of construction, and limited the amount of public housing units constructed under the Housing Act of 1937. Legislation required that construction costs be kept low, thus eliminating amenities that would make public housing more attractive than privately financed housing. Additionally, income restrictions were mandated to ensure that only the poorest citizens lived in public housing.⁵ Public housing, while helpful to many poor and working class

³ Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 189.

⁴ Jackson, 225.

⁵ Radford, 189-190.

families, did not become a significant part of new housing construction. While public housing construction was limited, the market for private housing expanded greatly.

To be sure the first wave of public housing provided much needed housing for families that struggled through the Great Depression, but as Radford measured, the impact of the Housing Act of 1937 did not “provide possibilities for democracy or self-determination for residents.”⁶ Private construction was the dominant mode of construction in the suburbs while very few homes were built in cities where there was a significant need for new housing. The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 placed authority over public housing at the local level. This authority included whether or not to build federally subsidized housing. As such, suburban communities that had an interest in collecting property taxes from all residents for services rendered could decline their construction. Most of the municipalities surrounding Newark spurned the opportunity to build public housing. The Act mandated that building costs be kept to a minimum, and there be strict income limits on resident families. This all but guaranteed that only the poorest Americans would occupy public housing. The act also contained an “equivalent elimination” clause, which mandated the “elimination of slum property in quantity equal to new dwelling units constructed.” This clause protected private developers from federal competition in the home sales and rentals. It limited the number of public housing units that could be constructed because the local housing authority would incur the acquisition costs of slum properties and clearance costs, all of which would dwindle already small

⁶ Ibid., 198.

budgets. The Act also authorized the creation of local authorities that would construct and administer the public housing program.⁷

According to Radford, the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 created two tiers housing of U.S. Housing policy. The act privileged the private market in housing through the support of housing policies that privileged housing in emerging suburbs. Public housing, in contrast, received scant support. It sanctioned divergent modes of living. The Housing Act of 1937 laid the foundations for a public housing market that would remain largely urban, poor, and isolated. In keeping with ideas of local control and the notion of a “free market”, the Wagner Public Housing Act of 1937 placed decision-making power in the hand of local authorities.

The Newark Housing Authority (NHA) was created in 1938 to direct the federal public housing program in Newark.⁸ Historian Harold Kaplan notes that NHA was “an independent public corporation responsible for the construction and management of low-rent housing projects.”⁹ The realization of public housing in Newark was fraught with impediments as the program was introduced to a municipality laden with numerous fiscal and social problems. NHA successfully led to the creation of low-rent public housing, but its impact was delayed and limited by Newark’s non-residential business community that sought capitol investment for private enterprises and not public ones. In Depression era Newark two blocs vied for control of Newark’s political economy. On one side there was the loose partnerships of civic organizations as well as political authorities that were most

⁷ Ibid., 188-190.

⁸ Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

concerned with using capital investments for the benefit of Newark's residents. The first iteration of the Newark Housing Authority was a proponent of the needs of Newark residents. The opposing bloc were those loose and sometimes intimate coalitions of commercial, business, and real estate magnates who sought to use city property and capital for their moneyed interests. Many of those men did not live in Newark, and their partiality towards business interests exacerbated the city's economic and social problems, placing Newark its communities on the road to crisis.

Newark Housing Authority

Six local appointees made up the board that administered low-rent housing. The organization was maintained by "federal subsidy, the rent from its projects, and federally guaranteed housing authority bonds."¹⁰ The first commissioners appointed to the board of NHA consisted of men whose professional affiliations appeared to make them suited for the job of planning and overseeing the construction of public housing.¹¹ There were five White men and one African American. Michael A. Stavisky, the social worker and real estate man, was Chairman. The vice-chairman Charles Gillen, who was Newark's mayor from 1917-1921, was Irish. Harold Lett was secretary of the New Jersey Urban League, who was initially appointed for one year, but would be reappointed to work for five years. He was the lone African American on the board. John Lee, a ranking officer on Newark's police force was also a member of the commission. John J. Towey, who was born in Eire, Ireland, was a former chief of the Newark Fire Department. Neil Convery, a

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ "Housing Board Named; 5 Members Appointed in Newark, Which Seeks \$6,000,000 Fund," *New York Times*, April 21, 1938.

city designer and architect, was appointed for three years and named executive director.¹² NHA's board of commissioners reflected, to a degree, the ethnic and racial diversity in Newark. Stavitsky was Jewish. Lett was a Negro. Gillen, Towey, and Convery were Irish. NHA also had an ex-officio member, Harry L. Tepper, who was counsel for New Jersey State Housing Authority.

In May of 1938 Nathan Strauss, administrator of the United States Housing Authority (USHA), announced that of the \$23,550,000 earmarked public housing in four American cities, \$12.6 million was tagged for Newark.¹³ In order to qualify for the funds the city had to present "comprehensive programs" to the USHA which indicated that the city was prepared to "proceed under the requirements of the Wagner-Stengel act."¹⁴ In a draft of its first annual report the Newark Housing Authority announced that it was established with the purpose of "providing decent, safe and sanitary dwellings within the financial reach of families with low income."¹⁵ Adhering to the liberal precepts of the New Deal, NHA hired executives and administrators who were "able, reliable and loyal," who have "an understanding of the objectives of our program and sympathy with its spirit."¹⁶ Indeed, the hiring of Stavitsky, who raised money for the Newark Young Men Hebrew Association, and Harold Lett, the executive secretary for the New Jersey Urban League showed the commitment of NHA to the expressed goal of providing housing for Newark's poor. Moreover, NHA was the model of efficiency, keeping operational costs

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "\$23,550,000 For Housing," *New York Times*, May 10, 1938.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Housing Authority of the City of Newark, N.J. "First Annual Report," December 31, 1938, 1. NPL.

¹⁶ Ibid.

low and avoiding bureaucratic wastefulness. NHA stated, “We have no supernumerary employees and no-one is overpaid.”¹⁷ NHA explicitly stated their scrupulousness and implicitly denied any corruption or swindling. NHA successfully built two housing complexes by 1940, and seven were built by 1947.

NHA’s record of early success was tainted by charges of infighting, and accusations of collusion and profiteering. Not long after accepting the position of chairman of the NHA’s Board of Commissioners, Stavitsky received an anonymous memo that read:

Dear Sir,

Look out for Towey, he does not like you. he hates all Jews. he is a chum of Neuscheller an[d] is very polished.

Yours Truly,
A friend¹⁸

The purpose of the note could have been to forewarn or to scare Stavitsky. Albert W. Neuscheler, who was born in Newark in 1892, was a realtor, insurer, and banker. He was also of German descent.¹⁹ Neuscheler may have been sympathetic to Bundist pro-Nazi causes in and around Newark.²⁰ The fact that his father was born in Germany, coupled with the assertion that his “chum” Towey... hates all Jews,” suggest as much. More, may have also stemmed from political and economic interests. Described as “one of Newark’s leading business men,” in real estate, Neuscheler had an interest in controlling the impact

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸ Anonymous to Michael Stavitsky, May 16, 1938, box 3706, folder 2, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

¹⁹ William Starr Myers, ed., *Prominent Families of New Jersey*, Vol.1 (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, 2000), 697.

²⁰ For a discussion of Nazism in Newark, see Warren Grover’s *Nazis in Newark* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

of public housing in Newark. The “polished” Towey was in all likelihood Neuscheler’s inside man on the Newark Housing Authority.

A July 20, 1938 *Newark News* editorial made an number of claims about the Newark Housing Authority, including division between the commissioners and shifting an overcrowded population from one are to another. The controversy surrounded NHA’s acquisition of Dreamland Park, an amusement park located east of Weequahic Park. One claim stated that the Dreamland Park site, which was approved for acquisition by NHA, was going to be acquired at a price “in excess of the 1934 price.”²¹ The implication of this claim reflected similar charges made against Newark Mayor Meyer Ellenstein and the City Commission. Ellenstein, who was elected in 1933 with a plurality votes, committed himself to developing Newark Airport and Port Newark. In 1936, the administration was going to purchase land surrounding the airport for the price of \$190 million. The *Newark Evening News* learned that the city could have acquired the property at an earlier date for roughly one-fourth the price, or about \$47.5 million. According to Stavitsky, the *Newark Evening News*, “which was not particularly friendly,” to the Ellenstein Administration, “began a campaign of front-page publicity... demanding an investigation.”²² Historian Paul Stellhorn found that the *Newark News* was especially sympathetic to Newark’s business community. Ellenstein, as well as some of his associates were found guilty. The *Newark News*’ Editorial Board levied similar accusations at the Newark Housing Authority.

²¹ Michael Stavitsky, “Letter to Newark Evening News Editorial Staff,” July 21, 1938, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

²² Michael Stavitsky, “Memorandum to Morris Waldman,” August 14, 1939, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

Dreamland Park opened on May 20, 1922. Billed as the “Largest Amusement Park in the East,” it was located on the Frelinghuysen Avenue stretch of Lincoln Highway, approximately two and one-half miles from the center of Newark commerce of Broad and Market Streets.²³ An advertisement for Dreamland Park highlighted its central location in a metropolitan area and easy accessibility via public transportation. It is not clear why it came onto NHA’s radar, but Dreamland Park was one of four locations NHA sought to condemn, raze, and then build low-income housing upon.²⁴ Acquisition of the site was delayed because NHA wanted to ensure the complex would have adequate educational facilities to accommodate children that lived in the project. As of December of 1938, NHA was in negotiations with the Newark Board of Education and the Board of School Estimate to build sufficient facilities. NHA stated that “we will not spend money for the purchase of land,” until both Boards agreed to make accommodations for the families that would move into public housing near Weequahic Park.²⁵ Members of Newark’s business community mistook NHA’s patience was for conspiracy and profiteering.

Michael Stavitsky answered the *Newark News*’ accusations in a July 21, 1938 correspondence to the Editorial Board. Stavitsky reminded the editors that NHA was transparent in their proceedings and followed regulations. According to Stavitsky, NHA, “informed [*Newark News*] reporters that we have entered into no negotiations either with owners or their representatives,” and that such proceedings could not proceed without

²³ “Newark Stadium and Dreamland Park Advertisement”, *The Billboard* March 18, 1922, 107.

²⁴ Dreamland Park reopened as a roller skating rink, the New Dreamland Arena. It was located further down Frelinghuysen Avenue near the Newark-Elizabeth border.

²⁵ “Letter to Newark Evening News Editorial Staff” July 21, 1938, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

approval from the United States Housing Authority. More negotiations could not proceed until the Dreamland site was appraised by city and federally appointed appraisers. Stavitsky voiced his exasperation with *Newark News*, stating, “I have said repeatedly that we will not go through with any project unless the price for the land is reasonable.”²⁶ A real estate man himself, Stavitsky mockingly reminded the editors of his resume, adding, “I think I also know something about values.” Stavitsky, the diplomat, conceded that NHA should “confine our construction to those areas which have adequate school facilities,” but he justified municipal appropriations for the new school, stating “if an outlay on the part of the City of \$200,000.00 will be helpful in the completion,” of the public housing program, “more than half of whose cost will flow into the pockets of local labor.”²⁷ Stavitsky displayed his acumen as not only real estate man, but as a social worker, casting school construction as an irrefutable benefit to Newark’s working class and poor who were in need of adequate housing and also to Newarkers in need of work: “I think you will agree with me that it will be good business for the City to expend this money.”²⁸ Stavitsky closed the letter with an admonishment to the editorial board of the *Newark News* that reminded the paper of their responsibilities as journalists:

In accepting membership on the Newark Housing Authority, I did so with the full knowledge that I was committing (sp) myself to a public service and that while in that service, I must be prepared for all kinds of “brick bats” and no bouquets. However, I was and still am naïve enough to expect that the organs of public opinion, the press, while reserving the right to themselves to be critical at all times, would nevertheless predicate their findings upon whole facts and all of the facts. Then I shall welcome constructive criticism.²⁹

²⁶ Stavitsky, “Letter to the Evening News”. JHS.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Stavitsky and the NHA would be disappointed, as the *Newark News* continued its campaign on behalf of Newark's non-resident business community.

Stavitsky would not get the constructive criticism he sought from the *Newark Evening News*. On July 29, 1938, Stavitsky sent a telegram to Honorable Nathan Strauss, administrator in the United States Housing Authority (USHA), seeking his help to dispel falsities leveled at Newark Housing Authority. Stavitsky alerted Straus that *Newark News* released an article the previous day that suggested that Federal authorities would investigate NHA site selection. Stavitsky agreed with this course of action, affirming, "I heartily approve this suggestion."³⁰ Seeking transparency, Stavitsky asked Strauss to clarify to the "press and public," that NHA had not took any action on any sites in Newark and would "not determine price for any property until appraisals are made by local appraisers appointed by the Real Estate Board and approved by," the USHA appraisers.³¹ Additionally, NHA would not "obligate itself to purchase any property except with," the approval of the USHA, and would not enter a project unless "the price for land is fair." Stavitsky requested prompt action, finding the actions of the *Newark News* and NHA detractors "bewildering and disheartening." USHA responded straightaway, inviting NHA to Washington for a conference. USHA Acting Administrator Leon Keyserling sent a follow-up telegram to Stavitsky to affirm USHA's continued cooperation with NHA. Keyserling verified that NHA was not guilty of surreptitious machinations. He attested:

THIS CONFERENCE HAS MADE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THE
SELECTION OR ACQUISITION OF ANY PARTICULAR SITES HAS NOT

³⁰ Copy of Telegram to Nathan Strauss for Release to Press. July 29, 1938, box 3706, folder 2, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

³¹ Ibid.

YET REACHED THE STAGE OF ACTION AND THAT BEFORE ANY SUCH ACTION IS TAKEN THERE WILL BE REGULAR APPRAISALS OF THE PROPOSED SITES AND REGULAR REVIEW BY THE UNITED STATES HOUSING AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED SITES IN LINE WITH THE UNIFORM AND CUSTOMARY POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSING AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES STOP.³²

With the assurance of the USHA, the Newark Housing Authority proceeded with plans for housing development.

On St. Patrick's Day of 1939, NHA commissioner Harold Lett announced that negotiations for the Dreamland Park site would be suspended "for an indefinite period of time."³³ Lett read NHA's resolution, which stated, "the time consumed by," NHA, "in meeting the objections and the affirmations of *various interests* in the city in relation to," the Dreamland Park site "has seriously interfered with satisfactory progress in," pursuing the adequate locations for public housing.³⁴ Echoing Stavitsky's claim that public housing construction broadly benefitted Newarkers, NHA determined that suspended negotiations would allow the Authority to "concentrate," on securing sites and building housing, "that labor and home-seekers may be benefitted more quickly and more satisfactorily."³⁵ Newark residents and workers supported the construction of public housing as well as the amenities that would come with the housing. Local labor showed support for the acquisition of the property and subsequent construction. The Ninth and Sixteenth Ward Clubs of Labor Non-Partisan League representative Solomon Golat voiced his irritation at the moneygrubbing: "That property shouldn't be dropped just

³² Leon Keyserling Telegram to Michael Stavitsky. August 3, 1938, box 3706, folder 2, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

³³ "Housing Authority Ends Action On Dreamland," *Newark News*, March 17, 1939.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

because a bunch of busybodies are trying to grind their own ax and work up another land deal.”³⁶ The Weequahic Section, the Park, and the Dayton Street neighborhood that bounds the Park make up the 9th Ward. Residents in the Dayton Street area also supported NHA proposals. Eleanor Wienkop, who lived near Dreamland Park at 30 Evergreen Avenue, articulated the desires of her neighbors near Dayton Street. The residents who lived near Dreamland Park wanted the Board of Education to build a Dayton Street Primary School. The plan for the school was initially struck down in referendum two years prior.

The conservative and business oriented Newark Chamber of Commerce established a Bureau of Municipal Research (BMR) in 1936 to concern itself with municipal spending. The first area of major concern for BMR was the Newark Board of Education’s new school proposal, which included the construction of an elementary school in the Dayton Street area, a new high school, and renovations to several older schools.³⁷ BMR opposed capital investment in Newark’s education physical plant. They made specious claims about declining student population in Newark. More they did not consider the latent impact of obsolete training facilities on young people’s learning. Newark’s business community did not send their children to the city’s public schools, and did not see the need to invest in education for Newark children. Stellhorn uncovered that BMR claimed that ““advanced compulsory educational requirements, constant propagandizing of the values of continued education, and acceptance of these values

³⁶ Ibid. The Labor Non-Partisan League, which supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s second term bid for President, was a labor organization that was open to organized and unorganized workers, as well as Democrats, Republicans, and Socialists. See Thomas Spencer’s “‘Labor is with Roosevelt:’ The Pennsylvania Labor Non-Partisan League and the Election of 1936,” *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 46. No. 1 (January 1979), 4.

³⁷ Stellhorn, 249-251.

(whether for educational or social values),’ had led to an inordinate rise in the high school population.”³⁸ Seeing the increase in secondary school enrollment as a Depression anomaly, BMR failed to perceive –willfully ignored— the importance of schooling to a post-Depression and post-War service based economy.³⁹ BMR launched a campaign that convinced Newark voters to vote against their interests in the 1937 referendum. The \$2,000,000 bond for capital investment in Newark schools was struck down.

NHA eventually secured the Dreamland property, and the Board of Education okayed the construction of Dayton Street Elementary School. BMR’s attempt to stymie the construction of Dayton Street Elementary School points up to the divergence between the interests of Newark’s business community and the needs of the city residents. This was a pattern to be followed in subsequent years. The school would eventually benefit the residents of the Dayton Street area, as well as Army veterans and their families. In 1946, the United States Army built housing for World War II veterans in Weequahic Park and their school-aged children attended Dayton Street School. Weequahic Park Veteran’s Housing will be examined later on in this chapter.

The school project for Dayton Street School received new life when the Newark Housing Authority plans for public housing revived the plan. Seth Boyden Court, which made the construction of Dayton Street School possible, opened in 1941 with 541 units.⁴⁰ By December of 1941, 1,600 Newark families were rehoused in public housing by the Newark Housing Authority. Those projects included Pennington Court with 236 units,

³⁸ Ibid., 251.

³⁹ Weequahic High School, which was built in 1933, was one of the few schools in Newark that maintained an educational program suited to the post-war economy. See Jean Anyon’s *Ghetto Schooling*, 96-97.

⁴⁰ “Housing In Newark; New Jersey City Has Six Large Public Projects,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1941.

the 354 unit Stephen Crane Village, and the massive 614 unit Baxter Terrace project. The opening of the 300 unit Felix Fuld Court and 402 unit John W. Hyatt Court in the 1942 made the Newark Housing Authority's public housing program one of the largest in the nation. In 1946, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Homes opened.

NHA successfully pressed through a plan for the construction of low-income housing in Newark. In February 1939, NHA announced that public housing in Newark would provide more than just a roof for low-income residents. Along with the Advisory Committee on Social and Health Service, Newark Housing Authority created a plan to use "public housing as an instrument to develop health, recreation and education for low-income families."⁴¹ In 1942, NHA appointed Newark resident Louis Danzig manager of community activity programs for two of projects. His work for NHA eventually garnered him national attention, and in 1948, he became the executive director of the Newark Housing Authority. His work will be discussed in the next chapter. NHA's early success, however, were tempered by changes to the Board of Commissioners.

Michael Stavitsky tendered his letter of resignation to City Commissioner Michael Duffy on February 23, 1939. Stavitsky cited that the "state of my health demands that I give up outside activities immediately and devote what time I can to my business."⁴² Stavitsky's ten months as commissioner chairman required "earnest application and endless time and energy." His real estate ventures in Weequahic, as well as his work for the YMHA were great successes. It seemed as though his work for NHA met the same achievement. He told Duffy, "Ground should be broken for the first project

⁴¹ "Outlines Housing Social Benefits: Newark Authority Tells of Health, Education Plans for Project," *Newark News*, February 18, 1939.

⁴² "Michael Stavitsky letter of resignation to Michael Duffy," February 23, 1939, box 3706, folder 5, Michael Stavitsky Papers. JHS.

in the early spring to be followed shortly thereafter by other.” But Stavitsky was reticent about why he elected to resign. He alluded to the “problems which have faced the Authority,” but he never identified those problems. News of Stavitsky resignation upset many Newarkers. His colleagues took time to express their unhappiness, and in their discontent, pointed to the reasons why Stavitsky stepped down.

Stavitsky received numerous correspondences expressing regret over his resignation. The letters lauded him for his work and efforts. The letter writers also extolled the virtues of Stavitsky’s character, and in doing so, highlighted the dearth of such virtue among city leaders. Beatrice Winsor, a librarian at Newark Public Library and head of the committee that recommended names for public housing developments, told Stavitsky, “The City of Newark is certainly in a bad way when the good people who are left in it cannot go on with public jobs.”⁴³ Chairman of the New Jersey State Aviation Commission and Newark resident, Richard Aldworth, expressed the need for person’s like Stavitsky in a short note: “I for one and as a citizen and a home owner of Newark most sincerely regret your action, particularly in such times as these when people of your reputation and integrity are so badly needed.”⁴⁴ James O’Brien, corporation counsel to the city, stated that he “realize[d] the burden the work imposed upon you and can understand your desire to be relieved of it, but at the same time I greatly regret the loss to the City and to the housing movement in the city.”⁴⁵ The letters carried the tenor of loss for city residents. O’Brien and Aldworth, when speaking about “the City”, were referring

⁴³ “Housing Publicity By Council Scored” *Newark News* May 8, 1940, NPL; “Beatrice Winsor letter to Michael Stavitsky,” March 1, 1939, box 3706, folder 5, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

⁴⁴ “Richard Aldworth letter to Michael Stavitsky,” February 23, 1939, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

⁴⁵ “James O’Brien letter to Michael Stavitsky” March 1, 1939, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

to residents, both homeowners and renters, and not business folk whose commercial interests were in the city, but home addresses were not. Stavitsky was a successful real estate man, but he was interested in supporting both his commercial interests and the needs of Newark's residents. Edward Parker, General Secretary for the Social Service Bureau of Newark, New Jersey expressed this sentiment in his letter to Stavitsky. Parker, who was "shocked" to hear about Stavitsky's resignation, praised Michael, telling him "That fact that you are a real estate man, and at the same time are profoundly interested in human welfare, made you—in my judgment—the perfect person for the position that you held."⁴⁶ Parker recognized the gravity of the moment and the need for persons to support public housing. He asked Stavitsky to reconsider his resignation, reminding Michael that "The stake is a high one, and we need the right kind of leadership." Parker believed that Stavitsky was "the right person to do this work."⁴⁷

Harry Weiss, Chairman of the Citizens Housing Council of Newark also asked Stavitsky to rethink resignation, but Weisman saw through Stavitsky's diplomacy and pointed out the source of the former chairman's weariness. Weiss and those who had followed the public housing program "with sympathy and intelligence" felt that Stavitsky did a "noble job," and they "believe that if [he] had full cooperation at every point, the Authority would have made still more progress that it has."⁴⁸ Weiss sought to retain

⁴⁶ "Edward L. Parker letter to Michael Stavitsky" February 25, 1939, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Harry B. Weiss letter to Michael Stavitsky" February 27, 1939, box 3706, folder 4, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

Stavitsky's involvement in public housing affairs. Indeed, Stavitsky, at the invitation of Harold Lett, joined Newark's Urban League.⁴⁹

Harold Lett was born on January 8, 1896 in Adrian, Michigan. He attended public schools in Toledo, Ohio; and Erie, Pennsylvania, eventually settling in Cass Lake, Minnesota.⁵⁰ Lett developed a distinct understanding of privilege in his early years in Cass Lake, a town that bordered a Native American reservation. The Letts were the only Black family in Cass Lake, and young Harold was "the only Negro in school."⁵¹ Despite his status as a minority amongst his White classmates, Lett remembered that he was, "on a basis of complete equality with my classmates and joined with them in their common prejudice against the Indians." He explained the peculiar perspective of growing up in Cass Lake, where he was not the most visible minority by simply stating, "I was a white man once." He graduated high school in 1915, and began working on North Dakota farms before attending Michigan State College. After leaving his hometown Lett encountered "all the restrictions and taboos directed against the Negro." The swing from privileged status in Cass Lake to underprivileged status in North Dakota bares what Lett called "the illogical, accidental and unrealistic aspects of race prejudice."⁵²

He would stay in Lansing, Michigan, until 1930. During that time, Lett worked for both private and state offices, working as secretary-assistant to the Purchasing Agent of the Novo Engine Company. During this tenure he cultivated social work skills as a labor recruiter of African American laborers in Illinois and Kansas. Unofficially, he was

⁴⁹ "Michael Stavitsky letter to Harold Lett," box 3706, folder 5, Michael Stavitsky Papers, JHS.

⁵⁰ "Harold A. Lett: A Biographical Sketch," February 1946, Harold Lett Papers. NPL.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

the Novo's welfare worker, assisting both skilled and unskilled Black workers. In 1924 Lett took his expertise to state offices, working for the Division of Negro Welfare and Statistics, and in 1927 was promoted to the Statistical Division of the Michigan Labor Department. In those capacities he delineated and supervised "studies of population trends and employment opportunities as they related to the Negro in Michigan."⁵³ Lett's work experiences made him uniquely suited to address the multivariate problems impacting African Americans and their transition from rural locales to the urban space. In March 1930, Lett became industrial secretary for the Urban League of Pittsburgh. Four years later he accepted the position of Executive Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League, where he served until 1945.

The League's maxim is "Not Alms But Opportunity," and Lett, through his work, sought to better the prospects for African American migrants in the city. He considered the structural impediments to African American mobility by highlighting the racial and class dimensions of Black marginalization. He was uniquely suited to serve on the board of the Newark Housing Authority where he served from 1938 until 1942. In that capacity he brought his social work experience to bear on public housing. Housing was just one component of a larger set of issues impacting the lives of poor and working class Newarkers. In addition to the housing units, public housing, as socialization projects, would also "provide nursery and day school facilities, playground supervisors, clinics," and other auxiliaries to facilitate the provision of shelter and also the social integration of

⁵³ Ibid.

poor and working people into the city.⁵⁴ More, Lett was aware of the distinctive framework of black poverty.

Anticipating the problems that would plague Newark Housing Authority's first spate of housing units, Lett posed the following question in a speech at the 1939 Urban League National Conference: "Are Low Cost Housing Projects Reaching the Negro?"⁵⁵ Lett raised a number of key questions in regards to the federal low-income housing program and whether the program would adequately meet the needs of poor African Americans in Newark. Lett cited the results of early federal forays into low-cost housing through the Public Works Administration (PWA) demonstration projects, which were initiated in 1934. PWA developed fifty-one projects. Lett deemed the program "revolutionary", and public opinion was favorable to projects that not only led to the construction of low-priced housing but also to construction jobs. However the intention did not coincide with the impact, as "land acquisition costs and construction costs followed the pattern of private enterprise," thus raising the costs of operation and maintenance.⁵⁶ The PWA demonstration low-income projects missed their mark, as "the projects were forced to attract a clientele considerably above those in the economic scale who were most seriously in need of modern housing."⁵⁷

Lett, looking at the African American use of PWA projects noticed some revealing trends. There was a high degree of racial segregation. Fourteen of the forty-eight demonstration projects housed "exclusively" Black tenants; three housed

⁵⁴ Harold Lett "Are Low Cost Housing Projects Reaching the Negro?" Delivered to the Urban League Conference on September 3, 1939, 1, Harold Lett Papers. NPL.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

predominantly Black tenants; three served an equal number of Black and White residents who were separated into racially exclusive units; and eight projects had a minority of Black residents. Racial exclusion was problematic, but even more challenging was the economic marginalization inherent to the project. Lett testified, “Almost without exception, these projects are serving a clientele consisting largely of the professionals, white-collar workers, and laborers from the higher income brackets with the Negro group.”⁵⁸ The class exclusivity was the result of “rental schedules resulting from the high development and maintenance costs inherent in the original program.”⁵⁹ Lett’s observations points to the problem of housing costs that are regulated by a profit-driven market, and the underemployment of Blacks. He stated, “A review of the incomes of unskilled Negro workers, those for whom low-cost public housing was designed... would no doubt reveal the remoteness of this class of workers from the realization of public housing aims.” The lack of adequate employment limited African Americans abilities to secure and maintain modern residences. This problem would be especially critical in Newark, where over half of the Black population lived in the Third Ward, with a significant number of Blacks in the Ironbound.⁶⁰ Lett stated, “On the basis of need and eligibility,” Newark’s Negroes “are due to receive a large share of pubic housing benefits.”⁶¹ Lett’s contentions were prescient, in that they addressed the particularity of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 4. Lett noted, “In New Jersey for instance, 72% of the colored workers embraced in [the Urban League’s] 1935 vocational study, received less than \$1000 per year income. In Newark, 63% of our Negro population of over 40,000 live in one blighted area, with additional hundreds occupying sub-standard houses in all sections of the city.”

⁶¹ Ibid.

the problems facing economically disadvantaged Blacks who were in need of both good wage jobs and adequate housing facilities.

In October of 1940, Lett discussed the numbers of African Americans on relief and unemployment in the city of Newark before an audience of proprietors, managers, executives, and social welfare agencies. Lett spoke on what he dubbed the, “forbidden topic” of Black employment.⁶² Citing Urban League studies of relief rolls, he pointed out that more than half of Newark’s Black population was dependent upon some form of government aid. He specified that the percentages of Negroes on state-aid in New Jersey increased from sixteen percent in 1933 to twenty-six percent in 1939.⁶³ He showed that consistency of this trend in Newark, detailing that the percentage of Negroes on city relief also increased from twenty-five percent in 1933 to forty-one percent in 1939. Lett demonstrated causality, reporting that industrial and commercial outfits in Newark and the rest of New Jersey denied Blacks opportunities to work, and thus curbed their capacity to get off the relief rolls. He reported that of 1,867 manufacturing and commercial concerns throughout the state, fifty-five percent had a policy “to refuse employment to Negroes.”⁶⁴ A survey of 361 firms in Newark that employed some 61,000 men and women revealed that forty-one percent of those companies indicated that they would not hire Blacks. The upshot of these interrelated problems, Lett affirmed, reflected “adversely upon democracy and weaken[ed] its roots.”⁶⁵ In Lett’s estimation, the “Difficulties confronted by Negroes... are in the final analysis paid for by the rest of the

⁶² “Negro Problems Are Discussed,” *Newark News*, October 30, 1940.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

population through tax funds.”⁶⁶ Lett placed Newark’s business community at the heart of the city’s fiscal crisis.

Newark’s manufacturing and commercial bodies aggressively sought tax abatements at the city’s expense. Their unwillingness to employ Blacks underscores their greediness and disdain for Newark’s residents, as they were complicit in maintaining unemployment that subsequently made the dole a necessary alternative to hunger and pennilessness. The business community maintained that the city’s resources should not go to relief, but they did not provide employment for those in need. Lett then called attention to the complicity of local officials, particularly the Newark School Board, which perceived “a narrowly limited market of employment for Negroes and [felt that] money should not be wasted in training them.”⁶⁷ Lett pointed out that vocational programs slots for African Americans were limited. Indeed, Newark’s business community supported cuts to Newark’s school budgets in order to siphon monies to pro-business expenditures. Lett recognized that racial discrimination was intimately tied to economic inequities. He detected that Newark’s business community shortchanged the city, and the growing population of Blacks suffered immeasurably because of it, especially the economically disadvantaged within the African American community.

At the end of his 1939 speech to the Urban League Lett admonished his fellow Leaguers that “If we, as Negroes, permit groups antagonistic to our interests to become the local interpreters,” of public housing policy “we can expect that the local program

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

will adopt the usual ‘American way.’”⁶⁸ By February 1942, the NHA Commission had been reorganized and repurposed. Lett and four members of the commission were forced to resign. The circumstances of Lett’s resignation are peculiar to say the least. In early April of 1939, the City Commission reappointed Lett to the NHA for a five-year term.⁶⁹ The following year Lett retained his position of vice-chairman.⁷⁰ The occasion of the annual commission election vote was fraught with tension, in that two of the five members did not vote. Lett, Charles Gillen, and Neil Convery conducted routine Commission business while Arthur Gillette and Frank Maguire did not. They refused to enter the meeting room, even after notice was sent to them that the nominations and votes for the chairmanship were commencing. The *Newark News* ascertained that both Gillette and Maguire had aspirations to be chairman of the authority, which, according to the paper, controlled “the local \$14,000,000 housing program,”⁷¹ and an awful lot of influence. When Maguire was asked whether his absence was equivalent to a “refusal to vote,” he answered in the affirmative.⁷²

The atmosphere in the NHA was toxic and not conducive to progressive housing development. On July 16, 1940, NHA ex officio member Harry L. Tepper, tendered his resignation from the housing authority, proclaiming that Newark Housing Authority was

⁶⁸ Lett, Urban League Conference on September 3, 1939, 12.

⁶⁹ “Lett Reappointed to Housing Board,” *Newark News*, April 6, 1939.

⁷⁰ “Housing Board Setup Stands,” *Newark News*, May 8, 1940.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

the “problem of the housing family of New Jersey.”⁷³ In his letter of resignation, he leveled that “unfortunately the history of the Newark Housing Authority, from its very inception, has been one of public controversy and dissension.” In response, NHA chairman Charles P. Gillen, along with executive secretary Convery said that Tepper’s comments “*probably* would be considered,” at the next board meeting.⁷⁴ Part of the discord may have revolved around NHA’s dealings with Longie Zwillman, but sources suggest that the racial composition of public housing was a source of dispute.⁷⁵

By 1942, NHA had built five public housing projects, and these projects conformed to local patterns of class and racial segregation. As Lett forewarned in his 1939 speech, higher income families benefitted from state subsidized housing, and there was very little slum clearance in Newark, as most of the low-cost housing was built on unoccupied land. Additionally, the projects remained racially segregated. Of the 210 families in the Ironbound’s Pennington Court, there was a cap of sixty black families. Most black families lived in either Baxter Terrace or Felix Fuld homes, and even then they lived in segregated units within the complex.⁷⁶ Baxter Terrace was the only project that had an African American majority in the first decade of public housing in Newark.⁷⁷ Controversy arose over management of the housing project that was named for the Newark African American educator, James Baxter.

⁷³ “Housing Board Criticized; Newark Authority is a ‘Problem,’ Tepper Says on Resigning,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1940.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁷⁵ Brad Tuttle, in his discussion on municipal corruption in Newark, cited a news report that indicated that Zwillman funded NHA construction projects. See Tuttle, *How Newark Became Newark*, 115.

⁷⁶ Price, 171-172.

⁷⁷ Tuttle, 129.

The problem was that City Hall and the general public received information about potential candidates for project managers before NHA could vet them. Harold Lett charged that City Hall was encroaching in business that it should not have. In early January 1941, Lett, Charles Gillen, and the NHA commissioners met with William T. Vanderlipp, deputy administrator of the New Jersey State Housing Authority. Vanderlipp said that names of candidates for the Baxter Street manager position were “getting out to the public press before they even get before the board,” of commissioners.⁷⁸ More, he was concerned about remarks made by one candidate, Miss Alene Simpkins, the day after her candidacy was brought before NHA. The substance of those remarks has not been ascertained, but Vanderlipp said that her statement had “political implications,” which had not been discussed by NHA commissioners.⁷⁹ Lett, tactfully, reminded Vanderlipp and those present that NHA was not a partisan body, stating, “The political implications don’t pass on this table, but outside of here.”⁸⁰ NHA was purposed to improve housing for Newark’s most needy residents, and as such be non-partisan. However, as an organization with a \$14 million budget and multitude of posts that paid a good wage, it became a body of patronage.

Low-income housing not only provided housing units, but it created maintenance, housing placement, and other social service jobs. The Baxter Terrace manager position had an annual salary of \$3,600. These jobs were used to curry favor and garner votes for City Commission candidates. Vanderlipp reproached the board, stating that it was improper for other groups and the press to have candidate names before the board. Board

⁷⁸ “City Hall Weight On Housing Told,” *Newark News*, January 3, 1941.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

chairman Charles Gillen shrewdly interjected, “If you’ll tell me how to manage the press, I’ll be glad.” Sounding the same concerns Michael Stavitsky leveled at Newark’s press, Gillen added, “I’ve been trying for 30 years.”⁸¹ Redirecting the dialogue back to the question of outside influence, Lett detailed, “There are 22 applications for the job here. And City Hall knows more about them than the members of the authority.” Arthur Gillette, board member and president of Public Service Corporation incredulously asked, “You mean to imply it’s all prearranged?” Lett rejoined with conviction, “That’s the implication.” The anonymous warning to Stavitsky regarding Towey and Neuscheler was both telling and prescient, as the NHA Commissioners were a divided lot with varied interest that were not in accord. The *Newark News* noted, “Gillen and Lett are minority members of the five-man authority.”⁸² One wonders: if Towey hated all Jews, what did he think of Negroes?

There was no question that there were divisions within NHA. Towards the end of the aforementioned meeting, Gillen moved that a resolution regarding Harold Lett be added to NHA’s official record. An African American organization passed a resolution that lauded Lett’s work. Gillen called it the “best expression of the feeling of the colored people of this city.”⁸³ The motion did not come up for a vote because no one offered up a second. This stonewalling was not confined to matters of personal accolades. The commissioners were supposed to discuss appointing a manager for Baxter Terrace. Despite being an item on Gillette, Maguire, and Lee’s agenda, the majority members adjourned early, thus stalling discussion.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

On January 13, 1941, Newark Mayor Meyer Ellenstein, along with Neil Convery and four members of NHA, met in Washington, DC with United States Housing Authority deputy administrator Leon Keyserling and other officials.⁸⁴ The meeting was convened to discuss, among other things, “differences which have arisen over the Felix Fuld Housing Project.” The Fuld Houses, named after the Jewish philanthropist and Newark benefactor Felix Fuld, was located in the Third Ward Hill District. Mayor Ellenstein agreed to act as an intermediary between USHA and NHA in order to expedite a resolution, and inform USHA of the progress by February. Little would be resolved, as infighting continued in the months that followed.

At some time after the January meetings, NHA Commissioner Arthur Gillette leveled charges of nepotism at Harold Lett. Gillette alleged that Lett “supported efforts to name Miss Alene Simpkins, a housing board employee, manager of the James M. Baxter Terrace project of NHA.”⁸⁵ Miss Simpkins and Lett were married in April 1940. Their nuptials were made public just a week before Gillette leveled charges at Lett. Gillette charged that the Letts were “secretly” married and that Harold Lett “withheld” news of marriage from the Urban League. More, the NHA commissioner charged Lett with fomenting dissension amongst Negro groups, delegating an inordinate amount of his Authority work to a younger member of the Urban League, and besmirching the reputation of the League.⁸⁶ On October 20, 1941, the Urban League appointed a committee to investigate the charges leveled against Lett.⁸⁷ On the surface, the Letts

⁸⁴ “Discuss Newark Project: City Housing Group and USHA View Dispute on Fuld Plan,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1941, 13.

⁸⁵ “To Probe Charges Made Against Lett,” *Newark News*, October 21, 1941.

⁸⁶ “Urban League Upholds Lett,” *Newark News*, December 17, 1941.

seemed to have committed serious improprieties, but a closer look reveals that Alene Lett was qualified to fill the position.⁸⁸ She was social worker who, despite Gillette's snubs, would become supervisor of leasing and occupying for NHA, and would eventually become manager of the Spruce Street Housing projects in 1959.⁸⁹ Despite her qualifications, Alene Lett nee Simpkins withdrew from consideration for manager after the charges were made.

While Gillette was convinced of Lett's wrongdoing, other members of the Authority expressed their support for Harold and Alene. On the same day Urban League announced it would investigate Harold Lett, NHA staff workers gave Alene Lett a bridal shower in NHA's Baxter Street office. She received labor saving devices such as a kitchen mixer and an electric coffee percolator. If there was a question of how she would serve the coffee, the staff also gave her a serving tray with an accompanying sugar bowl and cream pitcher. Two days later, in a public show of support for Mr. and Mrs. Lett, the Newark Housing Authority staff workers held a dinner at Newark's Cadillac Restaurant to honor the newlyweds.⁹⁰ The toastmaster for the Thursday evening gathering was NHA legal counsel Dr. Milton Konvitz, and amongst the evening's speakers was Reverend Charles C. Weathers, who attained the manager position at the Baxter Terrace Project. There was no hatchet to be buried between Harold Lett and Reverend Weathers. In fact, it

⁸⁷ *Newark News*, October 21, 1941.

⁸⁸ According to Kellie Darice Wilson, women like Alene Lett were trained social workers... who exerted considerable leadership with Newark chapters of organizations like the Urban League... (62) See Wilson, "The Political Spaces of Black Women in the City: Identity, Agency, and the Flow of Social Capital in Newark, New Jersey" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2007).

⁸⁹ "700 Friends Hail Dr. Lett at Testimonial Dinner Oct. 1st," *Sag Harbor Express*, October 8, 1959, 1.

⁹⁰ "Housing Authority Staff Honors Letts," *Newark News*, October 23, 1941.

was Reverend Weathers who presided over the Lett's marriage ceremony in Greenwich, Connecticut. The Urban League gave the Letts an even bigger gift: a public exoneration.

The League's Executive Board announced, "none of the charges was valid."⁹¹ Archie Ormond headed up the League's investigating committee, reported that Lett was "a keen, vigorous and effective champion on behalf of," the Urban League and "the rights and privileges of the Negro." Furthermore, he stated that Lett "has done much to increase the general appreciation of the specific problems of the Negro."⁹² In response to the charge that Lett's actions tarnished the reputation of the League, the committee announced that it was "convinced that any damage to the prestige of this organization has resulted from the making of charges and the publicity which," Arthur Gillette, "encouraged rather than from any actions of the executive secretary."⁹³ The League recommended that any questions about Lett's conduct in regards to NHA business were "properly a matter for the consideration of *that* body."⁹⁴ Even more, the League, in their pronouncement of Lett's virtue shed light on NHA's untrustworthiness by placing the acrimony amongst the commissioners square in the NHA's den. Ormond reminded readers that NHA's board "consented to Lett's acceptance of membership on the authority. It encouraged him to climb the wooded slope, knowing that behind the trees lurked the politicians."⁹⁵ Indeed, Arthur Gillette should not have picked up one stone.

⁹¹ "Upholds Lett," *Newark News*, December 17, 1941.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

In May of 1940, Gillette recommended Peter Berlinrut to the position of tenant relocation investigator, a position that paid a yearly salary of \$1,440.⁹⁶ Berlinrut was brother to Emanuel Berlinrut, a reporter for the *Newark Sunday Call*, a local news rag that was sympathetic to Newark's business elite. Frank Maguire, who was on the board with Lett and Gillette, was alerted to the appointment when he reviewed NHA's list of payments. Maguire was obviously disgruntled by the hire and the associated implication of buying good press for NHA. He stated, "That stuff has to stop or I get out quick."⁹⁷ Indeed, he did.

On Tuesday, January 20, 1942, Newark Commissioner Ralph Villani, at the behest of the USHA, asked five members of the Newark Housing Authority to resign.⁹⁸ Newly elected Mayor Vincent Murphy appointed Villani to supervise NHA. The rationale behind the request for resignation was "shrouded in mystery, with Mr. Villani merely telling the members that it was made at the suggestion of USHA on the basis of information that he had been forbidden by Washington to pass on to them." The board members refused, explaining that "they saw no basis for the request, but agreed to go to Washington on Thursday or Friday," to see deputy administrator of USHA Keyserling. According to the National Association of Housing Officials 1940 Yearbook, standing members of the NHA board were chairman Charles Gillen, vice chairman Harold Lett,

⁹⁶ "Housing Publicity By Council Scored," *Newark News*, May 8, 1940.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Board Refuses to Quit; Newark Housing Authority Spurns Request of the USHA," *New York Times*, January 21, 1941, 20.

Arthur C. Gillette, John F. Lee, Frank G. Maguire, and executive director Neil Convery.⁹⁹

Two days later, after meeting with Keyserling, five members of the NHA resigned.¹⁰⁰

The United States Housing Authority issued an immediate statement regarding the resignations of the Newark Housing Authority board members. “The repeated public discussions and disputes in connection with the Newark housing program have not facilitated that cooperation between the United States Housing Authority and the Newark Housing Authority essential to the most effective and economical operations of the low-rent housing program in Newark.”¹⁰¹ USHA believed that establishing, “an entirely new board will speed and help the program in Newark.” USHA further substantiated their call for the resignations by couching it in a discourse of the need for domestic accord during the uncertainty of wartimes: “In these times of intense national need, all are in agreement that absolute harmony and cooperation, and freedom from all difficulties, however caused, will make a contribution to the national defense.” In closing, the United States Housing Authority made a conciliatory statement that was more backhanded than congenial. USHA:

In no way intend[ed] this as a personal reproach to any member of the Newark Authority. On the contrary, it feels that each and every member of the Newark Housing Authority taking this step is making a concrete and definite contribution to the success of the low-rent public-housing program.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ National Association of Housing Officials, *Housing Yearbook 1940* (Chicago, Illinois, 1940). www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/national-association-of-housing-officials-us/housing-yearbook-1940-hci/page-28-housing-yearbook-1940-hci.shtml (accessed on December 29, 2012.)

¹⁰⁰ “Housing Authority In Newark Resigns; Five Members Quit in harmony Move After Washington Parley,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1942, 34.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

On February 11, 1941, five new members of the Newark Housing Authority were sworn in at City Hall.¹⁰³ The new members were Dr. Carl Baccaro, a dentist and holdover from the previous NHA board; George W. Campbell, an agent for the Carpenters' Union; Sargent Dumper, simply referred to as "real estate man"; Reverend Williams Hayes, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church; and Charles Schubert, business associate of City Commissioner Joseph Byrne. Dr. Baccaro was elected chairman. Reverend Hayes¹⁰⁴, whose name would christen a set of high-rise public housing tenements twenty years later, was elected vice chairman, replacing Harold Lett.

The shake-up of NHA, particularly the resignation of Michael Stavitsky and Harold Lett, draws attention to the anonymous letter from Stavitsky's "Friend", not so much because of Towey's purported anti-Semitism, but because of Towey's benefactor, Albert Neuscheler. Indeed, there were profits to be made from racism. Neuscheler had his hands in a lot of pots. He was president of the Penn Savings and Loan Association, president of the Newark Real Estate Board, and vice-president of the Bank of Commerce. He was a member of both the New Jersey and National Association of Real Estate Boards, two organizations declaredly opposed to federally subsidized housing. Interestingly, Neuscheler also collaborated with the Home Owners Loan Corporation's field agents in the preparation of the security maps and area descriptions.¹⁰⁵ Neuscheler was also on the board of trustees of the Ironbound Manufacturers Association (IMA). Neuscheler's interests as a banker, underwriter, and realtor ran counter to the expansion

¹⁰³ "Housing Board Sworn; New Newark Authority Takes Up Work of Dissolved Group," *New York Times*, February 12, 1942, 12.

¹⁰⁴ "Heads Newark Housing Board," *New York Times*, February 14, 1942, 13.

¹⁰⁵ List Of Map Consultants, Federal Home Loan Bank Board, June 1, 1939.

of low-income housing in Newark, however Neuscheler and his associates were willing to play both sides of the fence as long it benefitted their interests.

In late December 1943, the United States Housing Authority approved the construction of low-income housing for the families of one hundred fifty “Negro war workers.”¹⁰⁶ Construction on the complex was projected to cost \$600,000 and would begin when the Newark Housing Authority selected a site. In May 1944, NHA submitted a proposal to for the war-housing in the Ironbound section. After the War, the site would be included in Newark’s low rent housing developments. The Ironbound had two low-income housing projects at Pennington Court on South Street and John Hyatt Court on Roanoke Avenue, which opened, respectively, in 1940 and 1942. Additionally, Prudential Insurance Company funded the building of the Chellis-Austen housing development in the block of Lexington and Oxford Streets, and Fleming Avenue. Chellis-Austen was a low-rent development that housed four hundred and twenty white families. It opened in 1932.¹⁰⁷ NHA proposed to construct public housing on Chapel Street, which was less than a half-mile from Chellis-Austen. The Board of Adjustments zoned the Chapel Street site for heavy industrial use. NHA submitted an application to the Board of Adjustment to change the zoning designation from heavy industrial to light industrial, which would permit the construction of public housing. The Board of Adjustments held a hearing at Hawkins Street School on NHA’s application.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ “More Newark Housing: Federal Board Approves Project for 150 War Worker Families,” *The New York Times*, December 30, 1943, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Area Description, Area D-2, January 1, 1939.

¹⁰⁸ “Calls Housing Issue Racial,” *Newark Call*, May 16, 1944.

At the behest of the Ironbound Manufacturing Association several hundred Ironbound residents showed up to the hearing to protest NHA's plans for new housing. Harold Lett argued that opposition to this proposed development stemmed from the fact that African American families would be accepted as tenants.¹⁰⁹ This pattern of racial exclusion was reflected in earlier opposition to placing Black families in Pennington Court, but Lett contended that the opposition did not solely emanate from the desires of Ironbound residents. "The opposition is drummed up by civic organizations just as has happened in this case." Furthermore, Lett maintained "the opposition in this case stems from the same motive, which is not the best interest of the community or in the interest of better relations among its citizens."¹¹⁰ One of the organizations that opposed the Chapel Street project was the Ironbound Manufacturers Association. IMA representative Raymond Schroeder disputed Lett's claim about racial segregation in Pennington Court. Lett maintained that managers at Pennington did maintain records, but it was common knowledge that blacks families were excluded from the project. Pennington Court and John Hyatt Court, according to HOLC maps, were located in Section D-2. Working class and native-born whites, and no Blacks lived in Areas D-1 and D-2. In contrast, one out of five residents in the area D-3 were African American. The Chapel Street public housing project would potentially introduce African Americans to Area D-2. The Ironbound Manufacturers Association and their resident supporters were not able stop the building of the third public housing project in the Ironbound. The Newark Housing Authority opened the Franklin D. Roosevelt Homes on November 1, 1946. Veterans returning from Europe and Asia were given preference to live in Roosevelt Homes, but per NHA policy,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

the number of African American families that could move into the project was significantly limited. The 275-unit project that was billed to house the families of one hundred fifty Negro war workers would only house sixty. Newark's business elite sabotaged a public housing program designed to help Black veterans returning from the war. This pattern of privileging private, nonresident interests over the needs of Newark residents undermined residential stability in the city, and increased the burdens on the African American community. This is one of many patterns of liberalism without progressivism in Newark.

State Sanctioned Segregation in Weequahic Park

At war's end, many GIs returned to a country in the middle of a severe housing shortage, as the depression years and war rationing brought construction to a stand still. Many GIs, some of whom were married and had children, moved in with relatives and friends. The New Jersey State Legislature "authorized a \$40,000,000 bond issue to provided emergency housing for New Jersey veterans and their families." Harold Lett's reputation was not tarnished after his stint in the Newark Housing Authority, as Mayor Vincent J. Murphy appointed Lett to Newark's Emergency Housing Committee, which was responsible for providing homes for returning veterans.

During World War II, the United States Army appropriated "over half of Weequahic Park's 311 acres" in order to stage a camp for GIs.¹¹¹ At the conclusion of the war the Army left the site and the barracks were converted to two and three bedroom homes complete with gas, electricity, and heat. The converted barracks provided homes

¹¹¹ Richard O. Shafer, "Last Weequahic Families Moving," *Star-Ledger*, April 29, 1956.

for 578 families. Not unlike public housing in Newark, the veterans housing was populated on a segregated basis. Speaking before the joint committee of Housing on November 14, 1947, Samuel Hoskins, Editor at the *New Jersey Afro-American*, read a prepared statement that presented evidence of state and municipal support for segregating Black World War II veterans.¹¹² Hoskins affirmed that “despite the assertion of William T. Vanderlipp, State deputy housing administrator, that there will be no discrimination, we find that race is being placed above need.”¹¹³ Hoskins testified that between October 1 and November 3, 1947, over three hundred units were refurbished, but only twenty nine black families had been chosen, only ten were certified to move in, and only two had actually moved in. This delay was the result of plans “that called for segregating the families of Negro veterans in one section of the project and completing and filling many of the other unites before completion of the segregated section.”¹¹⁴ The barracks were divided into four sections, or squares, which were names after World War II theaters of conflict in Europe. They were Anzio, Corregidor, Oran, and Bastogne. 478 White families lived in Anzio, Corregidor, and Bastogne, which were located near Lake Drive East, around the racetrack. 100 Black families were confined to Oran Square, which was established across Weequahic Lake.

¹¹² Congress, *Study and Investigation of Housing: Hearings before the Joint Committee on Housing*, 80th Congress, 1st Session, Proceedings at Newark, N.J. November 14, 1947 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 3255–56.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Anthony Wereta lived east of the lake in Anzio Square, which was inside the racetrack.¹¹⁵ Wereta paid \$37.50 a month for rent. His apartment included a kitchen, a dining room, and two bedrooms. The apartments had electricity and the Newark Department of Sanitation provided front-door trash pickup service. For recreation, Wereta recalled going to local eateries in Weequahic like Sabin's, Millman's, or the Tavern. The Wereta's lived in the Park from 1949 to 1954. Anthony recalled, "the accommodations may not have been that great, but for a young married family like ours, it was like living in your own private home and we loved it."¹¹⁶

One hundred black families lived on the other side of Weequahic Lake in Oran Square. The other 478 white families lived in Corregidor Square, Bastogne Square, and Anzio Square.¹¹⁷ The charming Weequahic Park Lake was called the "watery Mason-Dixon line," as white veterans lived on the east side of the lake and blacks on the western side abutting Highway Route 22.¹¹⁸ Jimmie McGhee, reporter for *the New York New Age*, corroborated Samuel Hoskins testimony, reporting that aides to the director of the State Department of Economic Development Charles Erdman stated in court testimonies that "state veterans' housing projects cannot by law be segregated." McGhee reported that former Governor Alfred Driscoll praised New Jersey's Civil Rights act. Nonetheless, Black veterans who gave military service in a war for freedom against a racist and fascist

¹¹⁵ Anthony Wereta, "Living Inside the Racetrack: A Weequahic Park Memory," *Old Newark Memories*. www.oldnewark.com/memories/weequahic/weretatrack.htm (accessed on September 26, 2013) Also see Charna Jaker Weshe, "Weequahic Park Army Barracks" *Old Newark Memories*. www.oldnewark.com/memories/weequahic/wesche.htm (accessed on October 1, 2012)

¹¹⁶ Ibid..

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Jimmie McGhee, "Weequahic Park Veterans Offer To Patrol Unlighted Streets," *The New York New Age*, April 23, 1949, 1.

demagogues in Germany and Italy were confined to racially segregated housing in a northern city.

The housing in Oran Square probably was identical to the facilities in the other three Weequahic Park complexes. However the experiences of Black families in Weequahic Park were similar to events detailed in Curtis Lucas's *Third Ward*. Frank Guilyard, head of the Oran Square Tenants League, made the case for increased policing in their little section of Weequahic Park. The area around Oran Square was inadequately lit, and requests for police patrols were denied. Guilyard recalled an incident where a White man chased an African American woman to her doorstep. She made it safely to her home and called the police department. The officer arrived, and after she explained to him what happened and indicated that a regular police presence would have prevented such threats, the officer told her, "flatly" that, "they were not supposed to ride through Oran Square unless called."¹¹⁹ In another incident, two Black women, after disembarking from a bus, walked to the entrance of the Park on Meeker Avenue when they were followed by, "a car containing two white men who were attempting to entice [the] women into their car." There was another car following with what appeared to be acquaintances of the men in the first car. The women saw Guilyard, and so did cruising men in cars, who promptly sped out of the Weequahic Park. Guilyard noted the license plate numbers of the cars and escorted the women to their homes in Oran Square.

The veteran's housing in Weequahic Park was temporary. The planners of the project believed that homes would only be needed for five years after the first families moved in. The veterans, however, did not start moving out in large numbers until 1954.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

By April 1956, there were nine families left in the project, all of whom lived in Oran Square. The State of New Jersey sent them notice that they had to move by May 31st.

The developments in Oran Square might have well happened in the Third Ward, for the plight of African American families on the Hill or on the other side of Weequahic Lake went largely unnoticed by the residents of Weequahic. By the end of the Great Depression and World War II, Weequahic was a working and middle class community populated mostly by Eastern European and Russian Jews, many of who had formerly resided in Newark's Old Third ghetto. Max Wiener, a member of the state bar and reporter for the *Newark News*, wrote an item on Weequahic that attested to storied history and the growth of Newark's southernmost community. The article recounted Weequahic's colonial beginnings, its development as cluster of farming estates, the transformation of Weequahic Park from a abysmal swamp to the jewel of Weequahic Park, and the growth of the Park as a center of sport and leisure.

In the summer of 1949, one Weequahic resident of described the community: "This sections is not as rich as it's supposed to be. Of course, we have the a lot of the finest and newest homes, but there are also a lot of modest houses for average wage earners, and here and there even a fringe of below-average dwellings."¹²⁰ This description comports with developer Frank Bock's design for Weequahic as a neatly variegated community. The remark about the "below-average dwellings" highlights the effects of time an age on residences within Weequahic, but it also hints at the changed perspectives of aspiring Newarkers whose predilections were informed by developments in the suburbs. *Newark News* reporter Max Wiener reported, "When you talk to some of the

¹²⁰ Max Wiener, "Greatest Need if Recreation," *Newark News*, June 5, 1949.

leaders of the section, you find that their section pride is quite untainted by complacency.”¹²¹ Weequahic residents were “eager not only to preserve the good things they have, but also to work for constant improvement and progress.” Newark Beth Israel hospital was a jewel in Weequahic. Not only did doctors at Beth Israel pioneer research in obstetric sciences, but the also hospital offered, “approved residencies leading to diplomas in specialties such as surgical, medical, radiological, pathological, obstetrical, and gynecological.”

Another institutional jewel was the section’s public high school, Weequahic High School.¹²² Located at the summit of the Chancellor Avenue hill that slopes down to the Park, Weequahic High School is an art-deco building that was completed in 1932. 2,056 students attended the first day of classes on September 11, 1933.¹²³ The Newark Chamber of Commerce commissioned Columbia Teachers College to conduct a survey of Newark schools.¹²⁴ Surveyors gave Weequahic High, as well as the elementary and middle schools, the highest rankings in the city. The evaluators gave Weequahic High good ratings in facilities and instruction. The facilities were equipped to provide students with the most modern instruction. The school library contained over fifty thousand books, which twice as many as other city high schools.¹²⁵ Weequahic also offered a “rich and varied... industrial arts program.” By 1950 the Middle States Association of Colleges and

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “History of Weequahic” Weequahic High School Alumni Association.

¹²⁴ Jean Anyon uses this study in her analysis of Newark schools in *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), 64-72.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Schools gave Weequahic High a “very superior “ rating.¹²⁶ While the socioeconomic status of the residence can be credited with the progress of Weequahic High, the principal and instructional leader, Max Herzberg provided the academic vision for the school. Before accepting the appointment of principal, Herzberg was developed Newark’s English curriculum.¹²⁷

Herzberg was born on March 29, 1886 in New York. He started his early education in Brooklyn before his family moved to Newark. He graduated from Old Newark High School in 1903.¹²⁸ After completing his bachelors of arts at Columbia in 1906, Herzberg began teaching in Newark, first at Barringer in 1907 and then Central High School in 1912. He became an administrator in 1929. More than a teacher, Herzberg was a scholar and author. Herzberg took a keen interest in the life and work of Stephen Crane, the Newark-born author of the notable Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage*. Herzberg would serve as president of the Stephen Crane Association for six years and produce a school edition of Crane’s signature work. He was a member of over half a dozen educational organizations, and served on the Newark University Committee. He was an instructor of English at Mercer Beasley Law School and continuing education at Rutgers. Even more, Herzberg penned a number of textbooks, including *New Style-Book of Business English*, *Speaking and Writing English*, and *Myths and Their Meaning*.¹²⁹ Herzberg matriculated in Newark Public schools when the city initiated

¹²⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹²⁷“Max Herzberg Named Principal of Weequahic High” *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 1, 1933.

¹²⁸ The Old Newark High School was renamed Barringer High School in 1907.

¹²⁹ *New Style-Book of Business English* (New York: Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1932); with Wiliam Lewin *Speaking and Writing English* (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1925); and *Myths and Their Meaning* (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1945).

numerous reforms to modernize the public school system. These reforms were buoyed by the work of public servants like John Cotton Dana, Newark's advocate of education, whose cultivation of Newark Public Library and the Newark Museum made the pursuit of knowledge a civic virtue. In his "Creed for Americans", Dana stated,

I believe that we are and should continue united in the task of making everyone each day more nearly equal before our laws, our customs, and our opinions, and in giving to everyone every day greater freedom in thought and speech and action; all to the end that all may work together in harmony and in mutual aid to make this a still more desirable dwelling place for a gentle, intelligent and industrious people.¹³⁰

Weequahic High School, as a community institution exemplified these democratic and educational ideals. Albert Einstein, in 1934, sent a letter to Weequahic High titled, "Thoughts on Education and on American Schools in Particular." In 1939, Pulitzer Prize winning poet Robert P. Tristan Coffin read his poetry and addressed the students.¹³¹ Jazz Clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman contributed funds to the school band.¹³² Most notably, Weequahic High School was chosen as a site for a one of **five** Federal Art Projects that were commissioned in Newark by the Works Progress Administration. Michael Lenson painted a meticulously detailed mural in the foyer titled "The Enlightenment of Man".¹³³ The mural was composed of eight panels that captured eight epochs of human history and civilization: *Prehistory*, *Early Civilizations*, *The Dark Ages*, *The Renaissance*, *The Enlightenment*, *The Industrial Revolution*, *Modern Times* and *The*

¹³⁰ John Cotton Dana, "A Good Tool: A Book Wisely Read" (Newark, NJ: Newark Public Library, 1925).

¹³¹ Anyon, 72.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Weequahic High Alumni Association.

Future. Weequahic Jews lived in modern times and were working their way towards the future.¹³⁴

In 1949, Herzberg reported that 52.5% of the previous years Weequahic High School graduates attended degree-granting colleges, which was twenty-two percentage points higher than the national average. Weequahic High School also had the lowest dropout rate in the city, and 10% of the schools the students were attained honors. Expanding on its high standards of education, Weequahic High offered classes to adults. Herzberg described attendance in the programs as “always strong.” 240 adults registered for psychology classes, 150 for English and public speaking, and 90 for music classes. The adults of Weequahic kept things lively, too. 220 enrolled in social dancing, 48 took a course in the game of bridge, and 35 people took a course in “magic for moderns.”¹³⁵ In order for adults in Weequahic to take classes, they had to have the free time and disposable income to pay for books, scarves, and magic tricks. Weequahic residents had jobs and incomes that allowed them to better themselves. Moreover, registration for courses in psychology, English, and public speaking indicates a departure from the more traditional methods of social cultivation, as lessons are not learned from communal sages but from the textbooks produced by *experts in the field*. Social dancing, bridge, and magic suggests a particularly middle class form of leisure.¹³⁶ Weequahic was a space for upward mobility, where the sons and daughters of Jewish immigrants attended one of the nation’s best high schools and strove to attain the status and privileges of the burgeoning

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Elaine Tyler May, 29-30.

American middle class. Sherry Ortner describes this process: “We may think of class as something people are or have or possess, or as a place in which people find themselves or are assigned, but we may also think of it as a project, as something that is always being made or kept or defended, feared or desired.” She calls this processes “classing,” or engaging in “class projects.”¹³⁷ Institutions like schools and houses of worship were vital components of the community and necessary for Weequahic residents, Jewish and otherwise, to engage in class projects. They provided the supportive network that allowed children and adults to engage in classing acts. These institutions were a part of the Weequahic’s organization, and they had to be maintained.

Taking Ortner’s concept further, maintenance of a community’s substructures was also a class project, and Weequahic Jews sought middle class status by preserving and improving the neighborhood’s infrastructure. There was the successful installation of parking meters along the Bergen Street commercial-strip, which ran north to south through the community. They also secured better mapping of bus stops for pedestrian safety. These benchmarks aside, Weequahic residents were concerned about the welfare of their children, particular the creation of safe recreation space and expansion of educational facilities. Dr. H. Leslie Salov, an optometrist and president of the Weequahic Civic Association, explained:

We need a new school in the Weequahic section, near Lyons Avenue and Bergen Street for children who live too far from other schools. We need more dances in existing school buildings. We need more facilities for recreation for youth. We need a swimming pool.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Sherry Ortner, *New Jersey Dreaming* 13.

¹³⁸ Wiener.

Weequahic High School social studies teacher Martin Green furthers Salov's appeal: "The kids are bright in this section. Their scholarship is amazing. But that doesn't replace the need for recreation." These recreational spaces should be in "accessible places where the expense is not too great and where adequate supervision is provided." Weequahic residents sought after recreational amenities because it allowed for the healthy development of children. In the Third Ward, children played on stoops and on busy thoroughfares. There was a recognizable need for recreational space. One Weequahic resident understood that same need existed in their community: "Just because an area is not filled with slums doesn't mean that it doesn't need recreational facilities. All kids need a place where they can have supervised, wholesome fun, without undue expense." One such place was Weequahic Park. Weequahic residents wanted "to see the enormous Weequahic Park play space redeemed, or at least replaced."¹³⁹

By the spring of 1956, the nine families that remained in Oran Square were facing another problem: displacement. There was the Johnson family. Richard Johnson served in the US Army in Germany during the War. Johnson, his wife Mrs. Johnson, and their two sons Richard, Jr., and Leonard, lived in Oran Square for more than a year. Richard was a rackman, or production worker, for the American Smelting and Refining Company in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. According to Mrs. Johnson the family had made a down payment on a house in Newark. On the other hand, the Rice family's future was uncertain. The Rice family lived in Oran Square for eight years with their three children. Ulysses Rice, who worked as a mixer for Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation in Newark, had served in the US Army in France and Italy. The May 31 move-out day looming, Mrs. Rice worried that her family would not be able to find a new apartment.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Her husband made too much money for the family to qualify for low rent public housing. “We’ve been looking all over. We’d like to stay here because it’s so good for the children to have the park and the lake.”¹⁴⁰ Mrs. Rice, like Weequahic High School social studies teacher Martin Green, recognized the need for safe recreation space for her children. Mrs. Rice’s desire to stay because the lake and the park were good for her children suggests that while Oran Square was a segregated space with an accompaniment of dangers born out of racial abuses, the barracks location also afforded her boys a home on a lake. But the Rices were also encumbered by limited housing prospects in the private market, and excluded from a public option. The Rices were engaged in class projects. The location where the Rices moved is not known. In the month after the last families left Oran Square, the Essex County Parks Commission tore down the apartments, and the gas, water, and electrical lines, as well as the sidewalks and roads were removed. New grass, shrubbery and trees were planted, and the tennis courts and other play areas were restored. Weequahic Park was once again a space for recreation. By that time, Weequahic families would be much more concerned about the conditions of the Park. Indeed, there were larger structural changes in the city of Newark.

The postwar period was time of relative prosperity, as federal housing policies increased outlays for the development of suburban communities. Weequahic, ensconced between the core city and the suburbs, was Newark’s freshest neighborhood. It was also a community that was part of a city under great duress. Municipal spending on Newark’s residential communities declined. The dearth of spending led to a reduction in city services, including sidewalk repair, garbage pick-up, and housing inspection. The Newark Housing Authority would play a prominent role in furthering the

¹⁴⁰ Shafer.

underdevelopment of Newark's residential communities. NHA's efforts to eliminate Newark's slums exacerbated the city's housing shortage and created a market for realty practices that exploited the growing population of African American renters and buyers.

CHAPTER SIX

ADVOCATES AND ADVERSARIES

Urban Renewal and the Roots Of Racial Change in Weequahic

In 1949, Max Wiener interviewed Dr. William Ward, Jr., whose father was the noted horticulturalist and New Jersey delegate to the Chicago Exposition. Dr. Ward, in 1949, was one of the oldest residents of Weequahic; laid out many of the present streets in Weequahic; and witnessed the transformation of Weequahic from an expanse of orchards and farmsteads to a grid of palatial residential streets. In the interview Ward recalled his childhood and the old stone schoolhouse at the corner of Elizabeth and Chancellor Avenues that he attended as a boy. In March of 1888, his father ran for committeeman position in Newark. There was a blizzard two days prior to the election and the paths were covered with snowdrifts. Ward remembered, “A colored citizen named Samuel Remson—a son of a former slave—lived where Weequahic High School now stands. I went up there to get out his vote!”¹ Dr. Ward continued:

My horse managed to get me as far as Clinton place. Then I crawled along a fence rail and finally induced Samuel to come back with me, and we rode my horse to the schoolhouse so he could vote. Only 25 votes were cast that day. Oh, yes, father won.”

Ward seemingly recalled that story with a sense of satisfaction or perhaps of civic pride. It not clear whether Dr. William Ward, Sr., won the election on the strength of Samuel Remson’s lone vote, but the weight of getting the son of a former slave to cast a ballot despite the impediment of deep snow was not lost on the younger Ward. In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that courts could not enforce racially restrictive covenants in *Shelly*

¹ Max Wiener, “Weequahic Was Countryside Less Than 50 Years Ago,” *Newark News*, May 29, 1949.

v. Kraemer. The case absolved federal courts from supporting residential segregation. This was the first of a series of cases fought by the NAACP that systematically struck down racial segregation from federal statutes, and culminated with the 1954 *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision. Even as the Civil Rights movement scored major judicial victories, African Americans continued the trek in ever increasing numbers from the rural South to cities in Northern, Southern, and Western cities.

Civil Rights litigation was not the only developments in the American socio-political landscape in the post-World War II period. The slow down of the post-War economy and the housing shortage had not fully been addressed. Even as the courts mandated changes to laws governing racial discrimination, the legislative and executive branches of government sanctioned housing policies that modified the economy and restructured the urban/suburban landscape. The confluence of these processes led to changes in residential communities like Weequahic, a neighborhood that was an aesthetically suburban section within an urban center. Even while some Weequahic Jews worked to fortify their community, their fellows joined the exodus to the suburbs. Demographic changes in the core of Newark manifested in Newark's outlying communities.

The next two chapters will examine the ways in which liberal policies that supported metropolitan growth adversely impacted Weequahic. To be sure, the consequences of federal interventions into urban development did not necessarily have to undermine the residential infrastructures in Newark. However, well-established patterns of residential segregation colored the complexion of suburban development, and local implementation of federal policies deepened the racial divide. This chapter will examine

the impact of urban renewal on communities outside of Newark's Central Ward, the site of federally subsidized slum clearance. The displacement of residents from the city's core neighborhoods exacerbated the housing shortage in Newark, and increased the population in already crowded communities that saw little to no new housing starts. The final chapter will analyze the impact of highway construction on Weequahic. Federally subsidized highways connected urban centers of workspace to the growing communities of bedroom suburbs, but they also cut paths through neighborhoods. Whereas urban renewal cleared city slums, federal interstate highways destroyed modern homes and cut paths through non-blighted urban residential communities. Highway construction not only destabilized the communal fabric of Weequahic, but it imposed financial tolls on Black and Jewish homeowners whose properties were in the path and near Interstate 78.

The Second Great Migration

In the years following World War II, there was a major demographic shift that saw African Americans relocate from rural to urban spaces in increasing numbers. The Second Great Migration, much like the first, saw scores of African Americans leave rural agricultural economy and pursue opportunities in cities in the North and West. The First Great Migration saw 1.4 million African Americans leave the South for Northern and Western cities. Black Southerners settled in communities where they were dispersed throughout the city and organized amongst European ethnic ghettos. The Depression and the accompanying decline in industrial employment all but stopped the Southern exodus, but the war in Europe stimulated a resurgence of American industry. Additionally, shift towards industrial farming in the South led *Black Folks* to the urban center once

again, and in greater numbers, significantly increasing the total population of Negroes in cities like Newark in the post war period.² According to the 1940 Census, there were 45,760 Blacks in Newark. By 1950 that number increased to 75,000; and in 1960 that number increased to 138,000. One difference between the First and Second Migration was the intense segregation of blacks in the oldest and sections of city. As federally subsidized suburbanization opened the gates to middle class living for Whites and White ethnics, Black migrants were increasingly concentrated in the core districts of cities like Newark's Third Ward. These districts had the oldest housing, were overcrowded, high incidents of communicable disease, and high rates of crime. These communities were invariably labeled blighted (see Chapter Four on redlining), and city managers were especially interested in making better use of the land, improving property values, and perchance, providing a decent home for every American, including the increasing number of residents in an obsolescent neighborhoods. The postwar migration saw Blacks siphoned into increasingly segregated sections of the city, sections that often had the oldest and most obsolescent housing stock. Nationally, Black migrants settled in cities that were in a process of decentralization.

The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954

The Housing Act of 1949, like the Social Security Act, was a contract with the general populace that affirmed the federal government's commitment to the welfare of

² There were multiple reasons for African Americans embarking on northern migration. For a literary interpretation of Black migration see Farrah Jasmine Griffin's *"Who Set You Flowin'?: The African American Migration Narrative* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); For accounts of the Great Migration see Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010); and Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land: the Great Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Random House, 1992).

American citizens.³ The Housing Act elided socialism, as, “The act provides that private housing enterprise shall be encouraged to serve as large a part of the total need as it can.”⁴ As such, the Federal Government reasserted its commitment to suburban development as a significant portion of private home building was planned in the suburbs. This affirmed the purposes of the Federal Housing Administration, and its partiality to single family, detached-home building outside of cities. The act also committed federal resources to housing development in cities, too, as “governmental assistance shall be given to eliminate substandard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, to provide adequate housing needed for urban and rural non-farm families of low incomes where such need is not being met through reliance solely upon private enterprise.”⁵

The Newark Housing Authority directed the cities renewal plans. NHA came under the stewardship of Louis Danzig in 1948. Danzig grew up in Newark’s Third Ward during the 1920s and attended Central High School.⁶ He eventually graduated New Jersey Law School and passed the New Jersey Bar in 1930. Danzig took courses in housing at Columbia, New York University, and the New School. In 1942, Danzig

³ The Summary of Provisions in the Housing Act of 1949 states, “The general welfare and security of the Nation and the health and living standards of its people require housing production and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious housing shortage, the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, thus contributing to the development and redevelopment of communities and to the advancement of the growth, wealth, and security of the Nation.” Senate Committee on Banking and Finance, *Housing Act of 1949; Summary of the Provisions of the National Housing Act of 1949*, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, Doc. 99, 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ It is not clear if Danzig grew up in a working or middle class home. The Third Ward was considered Newark’s worst slum, however a very prosperous community and line of homes along High Street walled the poorest households and oldest buildings in what was known as the Hill.

became a manager for the Newark Housing Authority, overseeing two of Newark's earliest, low-rise public housing facilities. His community activity programs in these low-rent tenements were used as a national model for public housing and this led to an appointment to the Board of Trustees of war workers public housing in New Jersey. Anticipating the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, "Danzig had his legal staff prepare an ordinance making NHA the city's official redevelopment agency."⁷ City commissioners approved the ordinance.

Under Danzig's leadership, Newark Housing Authority's expressed purpose for redevelopment of Newark was the retention of middle-class residents that were absconding to the suburbs. In Danzig's estimation, middle class residents were leaving because there was a "lack of standard housing for middle-income families and an excess of substandard or slum housing."⁸ He wanted to build middle-class housing and commercial development in Newark. To achieve this Danzig orchestrated Newark's redevelopment in a "**nonpolitical**" environment," where "**nonlocal**" participants like the Urban Renewal Administration, Federal Housing Administration, and private developers were at the table, but local interests like City Hall and local community groups were not. The primary concern was "Middle-income housing on cleared slum sites." Clearance plans and project development funding were secured by the time the public was notified.

Danzig used public housing to create reservations of the poor. His methods were effective. NHA built the most public housing per capita than any other city in the nation. From 1949 to 1960, NHA initiated nine clearance projects, 7 of which displaced Newark

⁷ Kaplan, 11.

⁸ Kaplan, 15. Harold Kaplan worked as a Redevelopment Analyst for NHA and wrote his doctoral dissertation on NHA's "urban renewal politics" from 1949-1960.

residents. Development projects were zoned so as to create “natural boundaries” around Newark’s Central Business Districts. Residential and commercial development occurred in areas abutting downtown. Light commercial and institutional development created a ring around middle class development, thus creating or expanding buffer zones between downtown commercial business space and public housing projects; blighted--not slum—communities; and Newark’s private housing space. NHA’s first post war public housing development was in the predominantly Italian and working class 1st Ward.⁹ NHA then turned its attention to the Third Ward Ghetto, which in 1954 was called the Central Ward when Newark citizens voted to change Newark’s charter.¹⁰ The second wave of public housing in Newark, unlike the first iteration, was built on top of the cleared slum sites.

The Central Ward Clearance project was made possible by the Housing Act of 1954, which extended the provisions of the Housing Act of 1949. It provided NHA the means to achieve its redevelopment goals, especially slum clearance. The Housing Act of 1954 required municipalities to develop plans for urban renewal with the intention of eliminating slums and preventing the spread of blight through cities. As such, the federal government agreed to subsidize clearance and development plans as long as the Urban Renewal Administration, the federal oversight agency, approved them. The Act also provided funding for the “conservation and rehabilitation of housing and neighborhoods threatened by deterioration.”¹¹ Housing finance regulations were liberalized, thus alleviating the stringent terms of lending agencies. As such, a family seeking a mortgage

⁹ For a closer reading of Public Housing in the 1st Ward, see Tuttle, 119-138.

¹⁰ For history of charter reform in Newark, see Stanley B. Winters’ “Charter Change and Civic Reform in Newark, 1953-1954” *New Jersey History* 118 (2000): 35-61.

¹¹ B.T. McGraw, “The Housing Act of 1954 and Implications for Minorities” *Phylon* 16, No. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1955): 171.

for a house in Newark's Weequahic or Clinton Hill section was slightly more likely to get a home "whatever may be his race."¹²

Danzig received plenty of praise and recognition for his accomplishments in urban renewal. In 1952 the Middle Atlantic Regional Council of the National Association of Housing Officials elected Danzig president of their organization because of his, "fight against foes of public housing and for espousing tenant integration and lower insurance rates for project building."¹³ In 1954, the Newark Citizens Housing Council recognized Danzig for his work in North Ward Redevelopment.¹⁴ In 1959, the Newark branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People acknowledged Danzig's contributions to housing in the Central Ward, Newark's black belt.¹⁵ In 1961, Young Israel Synagogue named Danzig Man of the Year for "his religious activity, civic endeavor, and leadership in communal causes and for his achievement in the field of housing."¹⁶

This good intentions of urban renewal were undermined by not only the effects on displaced Central Ward residents, but the latent impact on the surrounding community. In 1955, NHA announced plans for the Central Ward, which required the demolition of

¹² Ibid., 175. This helps explain why Black families in Weequahic were able to secure mortgages. To be sure, this did not alleviate racial segregation, as we shall see, but it does show how African Americans were able to gain a foothold in Newark's private housing market. These provisions were limited. As Yutaka Sasaki points out, savings and loans were not quick to provide mortgages in interracial neighborhoods, and when they did they often required substantial down payments from African American homebuyers, many were "compelled to resort to second and sometimes third mortgages or personal loans" (120).

¹³ Alexander Milch, "Housing Unit Picks Danzig," *Newark News*, May 24, 1952.

¹⁴ "Danzig Voted Housing Award," *Newark News*, May 18, 1954.

¹⁵ "Danzig to Be Honored," *Newark News*, March 10, 1961.

¹⁶ Ibid.

sixty blocks within the Old Third Ward.¹⁷ NHA also announced plans for a 1,206 unit public that was slated to open in December of 1959. Indeed, this plan coincided with the Central Planning Board's 1947 master plan that designated the Central Ward "obsolete," and recommended that it be cleared and rebuilt."¹⁸ The same plan designated Newark's South Ward a "good residential area" that required "increased protection." However the estimated number of units to be built fell way short of the number of families that were being displaced by slum clearance.¹⁹ A total of 8,500 African American families were displaced by NHA's Central Ward redevelopment plan. 800 of those families were going to be initially displaced by the clearance required for the Stella Wright housing project. To be sure those who were displaced would have first dibs at the newly constructed apartments at Spruce Street, but many were disqualified because of income restrictions. As such eighty to ninety percent of the first 800 families would be relocated to the neighborhoods south and west of the Central Ward, or what were called transitional areas. 180 of the families were eventually settled in Clinton Hill and West Ward communities. Indeed, in May 1958, NHA's Director of Relocation informed the residents of Clinton Hill that they should be prepared to receive between 3,000 and 3,750 families, a community that was already built up and did not see any new housing construction since the 1920s.²⁰ By 1959 a great number of the Central Wards 50,000 residents would become what historian Wendell Pritchett called "urban renewal refugees," forced to find

¹⁷ Kaplan, 8.

¹⁸ See Figure 6.1.

¹⁹ See Amanda Seligman's "What is the Second Ghetto?" *Journal Of Urban History* 29 (March 2003), 272-80; and Richard M. Flanagan's "The Housing Act of 1954: The Sea Change in National Urban Policy," *Urban Affairs Review* 33 (November 1997), 265-286.

²⁰ Kaplan, 158-159.

homes in other sections of the city, but most especially in the already crowded the South Ward.²¹

The displacement of African Americans into the South Ward prompted the egress of Whites from those communities. The Mayor's Commission on Group Relations corroborates the impact of urban renewal on the displacement of Blacks from the Central Ward and shows the corresponding movements of White residents through, and eventually out of Newark in response to the influx of Blacks into white communities. Newark mayor Leo Carlin created the Commission on Group Relations in order to measure the demographic changes taking place in Newark. The Commission reported "dramatically that every neighborhood, " in the city, "is recruiting Negroes more from the Central Ward than from any place else."²² Almost half, or 43% of Blacks that moved into the South Ward had previously lived in the Central Ward. The Commission went further, stating that the number of Negroes in Clinton Hill would eventually reach a critical mass where, like the Central Ward, it was "beginning to become an importance source of Negroes moving to other parts of the city." Correspondingly, the Commission predicted that the White population in communities abutting the Central Ward, which include the Central Business District-South Broad Street, the West Ward, and Clinton Hill would see "relatively high losses," and that there would be "greater clustering," in Newark's outer communities.²³ Overcrowding in neighborhoods outside of the Central Ward and racial restrictions in suburban housing markets surrounding Newark, exacerbated a need for

²¹ Pritchett, 5.

²² Mayor's Commission on Group Relations and Market Planning Corporation, *Newark: a City in Transition* Vol.2, (Newark, NJ: 1959), 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

housing and created an unfair market that tied a “noose” around the neck of Newark’s Black community.²⁴

Blockbusting and Rent Gouging

The displacement of Black families created a substantial market of renters from various income levels who were forced to find accommodations in communities immediately outside of slum clearance zones, as well as peripheral communities like Weequahic. Unprincipled landlords would increase rents to turn profit from rental units. If White tenants occupied the units, the landlords would evict them, or raise the rents in order to force them out.²⁵ At times they would subdivide apartments, or single and two family homes in order to bring in more tenants and rent monies. The Mayor’s Commission on Changing Populations found that in Clinton Hill, 54% of African American renters paid rents at \$75 or more, compared to only 31% of White renters.²⁶ “In view of the lower incomes of the Negro,” the Commission found it “surprising,” that Blacks would be “as likely as the whites to be in the upper rental bracket.” Members of the Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations found that rent gouging was most frequent in Clinton Hill and the Central Ward and it was “spilling over into other areas.”²⁷

Federal subsidies for the suburbs and urban renewal plans led to voluntary and forced migrations across the metropolis. Increased use of the automobile on federal

²⁴ For an examination of “selling on contract” and other methods of siphoning money from Black homebuyers see, Satter, 36-63.

²⁵ Minutes from Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations, June 17, 1959, box 3, Daniel Sutherland Anthony Papers, NPL.

²⁶ *Newark A City in Transition*, 35.

²⁷ Minutes from Mayor’s Commission on Group Relations, June 17, 1959.

highways helped speed the process. In 1940, 99.2% of Weequahic's 49,994 residents were classified as white, and most of those residents were Jewish. By 1950, the population increased to 53,315 residents and about 98% of those residents were white. The Negro population almost tripled, with 1,269 resident living in Weequahic. A great majority of those residents lived in Oran Square, the housing complex for Black war veterans located in Weequahic Park. Oran Square was torn down in 1956, and those families moved to places unknown, but by 1960, the African American population in Weequahic increased seven fold to 9,136. The white population decreased to 37,538.

There were multiple forces that pushed and pulled African Americans into Weequahic, and Jews through and out of Weequahic into the suburbs. There were Jewish families in the early postwar years that sought the amenities of the suburbs. "I think that Jews have always wanted... to better themselves," commented former Weequahic resident Rose Parsonnet.²⁸ "And as they improved economically, they wanted to have better homes in different locations." She also said that as they grew older and their children moved away, they may have desired a smaller home, or "maybe homes with a little more grounds, with a little more pleasant outlook, not houses 25 feet away from them." Jews, like other white ethnics, were caught up in the movement to the suburbs.²⁹ Between January 1952 and October 1954, Weequahic, which had 8,700 Jewish families in 1947, saw a net loss of 305 families.³⁰ 205 of Clinton Hills 3,700 Jewish families

²⁸ Rose Parsonnet, interview.

²⁹ See Roediger, 224-234.

³⁰ Population Movement of Jewish Families in Essex County (January 1, 1952-October 31, 1954), December 6, 1954, box 4606, folder 1, Population Date: Correspondence 1954-1957. JHS. Institutions like synagogues or retailers may have used these measurements to determine the ideal place to establish or relocate.

moved south into Weequahic or left Newark. In contrast, 158 Jewish families joined 617 Maplewood's Jewish families between 1947 and 1954. During that same period the number of Jewish families in South Orange increased from 566 to 728. Further west, in Pleasantdale and West Orange's the number of Jewish families increased from 331 to 581. Livingston saw the greatest increase in its Jewish population with 252 families. In 1947, there were no Jewish families there. The federal government made the pull of the suburbs particularly desirable with the guarantee of low-interest amortized loans, good municipal services, and all the enticements of middle class living.³¹ Federally subsidized highways took them there.

Changing Faces

The amenities of suburban residency pulled many Jews to the suburbs, but there was also the push of African American incursion into the urban borderland of Weequahic. There were varied responses to the in-migration of African Americans. Segments of the Jewish community chose to leave Newark altogether. Others moved further south into homogenously white sections of Weequahic. Others stayed put. The responses could be sorted into two groupings: the preservation of the Jewish ghetto; and acquiescence to an interracial community. Community preservation manifested in persisting in the community and excluding African Americans from Weequahic, or leaving Weequahic and preserving the integrity of the Jewish community in the suburbs. Moving into the suburbs allowed Jews to distance themselves not just from cities, but

³¹ See Cohen, 194-256; May, 19-20.

from African Americans. This distancing was a means by which Jews, according to some scholars, became White folks.³²

Philip Roth dramatizes distancing in his novella *Goodbye, Columbus*. Roth portrays the sentiments of moving into the suburbs in the novella. In this work that is published in 1959, Roth assumes the persona of the narrator, Neil Klugman, a college-aged Jewish boy who lives with his aunt and uncle in Weequahic. The power of Roth's work is that he actualizes social class as space. Newark represents the old and the suburbs the modern and palatial. "Once I'd driven out of Newark, past Irvington," says Klugman, "...the night grew cooler."³³ He continued, "It was, in fact, as though the hundred and eighty feet that the suburbs rose in altitude above Newark brought one closer to heaven, for the sun itself became bigger, lower, and rounder." Even more, Klugman noted, "the streets whose names were those of eastern colleges, as though the township, years ago, when things were named, had planned the destinies of the sons of its citizens." The narrative follows Klugman's relationship with Brenda Patamkin, a Jewish co-ed whose family lives Short Hills. Tensions arise in the budding romance as differences in opinion and comportment between Klugman and Patamkin come to the fore. These differences are rooted in class. The Patamkin children do not work and they have a housekeeper. Neil Klugman works at the Newark Library and his aunt whom he lives with labors as a housewife. Klugman attends Newark University, a school that traditionally educated the children of immigrants.³⁴ Patamkin attends Radcliffe, and her brother Ohio State

³² For reading of Whiteness studies and Judaism, see Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folk*. Also see Cheryl Harris' "Whiteness as Property" in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 276-291.

³³ Philip Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus, And Five Short Stories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 6.

³⁴ The University of Newark became the Newark Colleges of Rutgers University in 1946.

University. Roth evidences cultural contrasts, too. Mr. Patimkin and Klugman both have “bumps” on their noses. Brenda had a rhinoplasty, had her “diamond” removed and “dropped down some toilet in Fifth Avenue Hospital.”³⁵ In another instance, Mr. Patimkin draws distinctions between himself and Neil, and his suburban raised children. After asking Neil if he knows a Yiddish term, which Klugman does, the Father Patikim says that Klugman is more Jewish than his own children. He calls them *goyim*.³⁶ Roth depicted the suburbs as place of appropriation, but shows that the appropriation of middle class entailed loss.³⁷

In contrast, some Jews elected to remain in the community. Rather than selling their homes when Blacks first moved into the neighborhood, some Jews remained in the neighborhood until their children graduated from high school, and then relocated their empty nests to the suburbs. And there were others firmly committed to remaining good neighbors to the Blacks and creating an interracial community. Weequahic’s infrastructure was fairly stable and community institutions such as Weequahic High School were still strong through the early 1960s.³⁸ However, the city’s infrastructure was in decline. The number of school age children in Newark was increasing, and there was overcrowding especially in majority Black schools. Yet, a last school built in Newark was Weequahic High School, which opened in 1933. Lowered educational standards, increased crime, and lowered property values were ascribed to the character of the African American community, rather than the effect of structured inequalities. Indeed,

³⁵ Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus*, 20.

³⁶ Ibid., 67. *Goyim* is Yiddish for gentile. It is a disparaging term when referring to another Jew.

³⁷ Ross Posnock discusses the discourse of appropriation and assimilation of *Goodbye, Columbus* in *Philip Roth’s Rude Truth: The Art of Immaturity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 88-124.

³⁸ Sam Convissor, interview by the author, South Orange, NJ, June 4, 2012.

fighting for the possibility of an interracial community was a political act; it was, arguably the next logical step in the Civil Rights Movement. What is clear is that there was no consensus among Weequahic Jews on the need to wage such a campaign. There were just as many reasons to leave as there were to stay. There were examples of people endeavoring to create interracial communities despite the incentives not to.

Silences

There is a relationship between space and identity, or what psychiatrist Mindy Thompson-Fullilove calls “rootedness”.³⁹ The Jewish ghetto, first in Newark’s Third Ward, and then in Weequahic, was the place in which Jewishness was acted out. “The most popular forms of Jewish expression in the postwar decades,” according to Seth Forman, were contributing “to Jewish organizations, philanthropies, and synagogues, living in close proximity to other Jews, and sending offspring to Jewish summer camps—actions that brought Jews into social proximity.”⁴⁰ This social proximity was manifest in communities like Weequahic.⁴¹ The incursion of significant numbers of African Americans into that space threatened to disrupt that social proximity. “American Jews,” according to Forman, “in large measure, expressed their identity as Jews by associating

³⁹ Thompson Fullilove describes, “... our ability to master and run the maze of life, the mazeway, the near environment within which we find food, shelter, safety, and companionship. We love the mazeway in which we are rooted, for it is not simply the buildings that make us safe and secure, but, more complexly, our knowledge of the “scene” that makes us so. We all have our little part to play, carefully synchronized with that of all the other players: we are rooted in that, our piece or the world-as-stage” (19). See Thompson Fullilove’s *Roots Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World/Ballantine, 2004).

⁴⁰ Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 60.

⁴¹ Forman, 61-62.

with and living among other Jews.”⁴² As such, this placed a premium on the exclusivity of the Jewish community, or the preservation of the religio-cultural ghetto. In Forman’s judgment, postwar suburbanization and the accompanied whitening of the Jews “put the very essence of Jewish identity on a collision course with the growing civil rights demand for racial integration.”⁴³

The Jewish community was involved in Civil Rights and labor causes that advocated for racial equality and class parity between Blacks and Whites. Whether through the support of organizations like the NAACP, direct action through labor unions; Civil Disobedience with the Freedom Riders in the South; or making financial contributions to Civil Rights organizations, there was a long-standing partnership between African Americans and Jews. Literary scholar Eric Sundquist points out Jews viewed Blacks as “America’s Jews”, who were “far more likely to bear the brunt of American racism, a fact that made Jews sympathetic to their predicament if for no other reason than that it reminded them of the European pogroms that they had escaped-and might face once again in the United States but for the scapegoat provided by the African American.”⁴⁴ In his novel *The Plot Against America*, Roth captures the truth of the affinity between Blacks and Jews in a conversation between a son and mother in fictitious pre-World War II America. They talk about a set of stamps commemorating American educators. In the set of five stamps were Horace Mann, Mark Hopkins, Charles W. Eliot, Frances E. Willard, and Booker T. Washington, who, as Roth’s notes, was the first

⁴² Ibid., 56.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Eric Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge, MA; London: Belknap Press, 2005), 3.

African American to appear on an American postage stamp. After placing the Washington stamp in the album the character Roth asks his mother, “Do you think there’ll ever be a Jew on a stamp?” “Probably— someday, yes. I hope so, anyway,” she replied.⁴⁵ If the United States Postal Service celebrated Negro accomplishment, there was indeed a possibility for Jews to be recognized, too. The spatial and conditional proximity between Blacks and Jews, and their analogous histories of racial persecution and marginalization provided a context in which chipping away at racial and anti-Semitic barriers was viewed as gains for both communities.

There are few instances that better represents this mutuality than Rabbi Joachim Prinz’ speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. He began his remarks stating, “I speak to you as an American Jew.”⁴⁶ Rabbi Prinz’ was the spiritual leader of Congregation B’Nai Abraham, a Conservative synagogue located in the Clinton Hill section of Newark. Formerly a rabbi in Germany, he was expelled by the Nazis in the 1930s and eventually came to the United States. Affirming the Jewish duty of Tzedakah, he stated that “our fathers taught us thousands of years ago that when God created man, he created him as everybody's neighbor.” Rabbi Prinz redefined neighbor, interrupting the notion of neighbor as spatially limited, and racially and class specific: “Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept.” He continued, “It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man's dignity and integrity.” The problem, as Rabbi Prinz saw it, was silence. Remaining silent on injustice made one complicit with injustice. He drew parallels between his experiences in Nazi Germany and postwar United States, stating that the failure to confront “bigotry and hatred” in both

⁴⁵ Roth, *The Plot Against America* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 23.

⁴⁶ Prinz, interview.

contexts was worthy of contempt. “Silence,” was the “most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and most tragic problem.” Rabbi Prinz was not the only member of the rabbinate to observe a collective silence amongst Jews.

Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf in 1964 commented on the increasing Jewish reticence to participating in Civil Rights campaigns and leveled that his fellow Jews were most concerned with upward mobility rather than confronting racism. He posited Jewish silence a requisite for assimilation. He saw Jews actively abjuring their religious obligations rather than passively ignoring them. Rabbi Wolf described, “The American Jew,” who “lives by his superiority to and distance from the American Negro and the American poor.”⁴⁷ Wolf scolded the tepid Jew, who “will approve integration but oppose every possible step toward it.” Wolf sounded much like those members of resurgent Black Power movement whose dialogue was very critical of Jews. “Our minds and our hearts and our fearful flesh agree that the Negro should be made to behave in a way protective of our own imperiled American success,” he confessed.⁴⁸ Wolf believed that adherence to the Torah required Jews to actively and passionately contest for Civil Rights on behalf and with African Americans. He was highly critical of the “bourgeois Jew” and “bourgeois do-goodism”. Wolf perceived crusades for freedom against capitalist state law in accord with Divine decree, stating “the Negro defies police power and fierce human opposition to obey his God,” while bourgeois Jews “are loyal to our white communities and seek better police protection while by every act and by every refusal we defy God.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Arnold Jacob Wolf “The Negro Revolution and Jewish Theology” *Judiasm*, Fall 1964 in *Unfinished Rabbi: Selected Writings of Arnold Jacob Wolf* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 86.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

Wolf supported Jewish upward mobility, but not at the expense of African Americans whose marginalization and exploitation were functions of the state. His criticism was particularly scathing—and possible heavy-handed—but his critique revealed the ways in which middle classing and the pursuit of Whiteness were entwined with racially marginalizing and exploitative systems of power. One form of that power was the use of restrictive covenants.

Covenants with Whiteness

Restrictive covenants are real estate contracts that impose restrictions on property. They compel property owners to follow circumscribed rules for use. Covenants were used to prevent the influx of inharmonious elements into residential neighborhoods, including barring Blacks and Jews from white communities. In 1948, the Supreme Court in the *Shelley v. Kraemer* stipulated that restrictive covenants violated the 14th Amendment and could not be enforced by the state.⁵⁰ Unenforceability did not diminish their utility.⁵¹ They were used to preserve the integrity of white residential space and continued to shape consumer activity in the postwar housing market.⁵²

Weequahic Jews' opinions about African American homeownership in White communities were similar to those of non-Jewish Whites in Newark. A 1959 survey

⁵⁰ *Shelley v. Kraemer* 334, U.S. 1 (1948), www.supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/334/1/case.html (accessed on June 5, 2013).

⁵¹ See Matthew Countryman's *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 68-75.

⁵² Richard R. W. Brooks makes a compelling argument about the continued utility of restrictive covenants after the Supreme Court rendered them unenforceable. See "Covenants without Courts: Enforcing Residential Segregation with Legally Unenforceable Agreements" in *American Economic Review* Vol. 101, No. 3 (May 2011): 360-365. Also see Wendy Plotkin's, "Deeds of Mistrust: Shelly v. Kraemer (1948) and Restrictive Covenants in Chicago, 1927-1950" presented at Newberry Library Urban History Dissertation Group (May 1997), www.wbhsi.net/~wendyplotkin/DeedsWeb/newberry.html (accessed on December 20, 2013).

commissioned by the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations asked Newark homeowners about the impact of Negroes on property values. Mayor Leo Carlin established the Mayor's Commission in 1955 under the auspices of Newark Fair Practice Ordinance and New Jersey's "policy against discrimination based on race, color, creed or national origin."⁵³ The Commission found that citywide, 75% of white homeowners believed that property values fell when African Americans purchased a home in a predominantly white neighborhood.⁵⁴ In Weequahic 78% of White homeowners in shared the same belief, and only 12% believed that there were no changes. White Newarkers were asked if "Landlords and Property Owners Should be Allowed to Enter Into Agreements Not to Sell or Rent to Minority Groups," or in other words should property owners be allowed enter restrictive covenants. 59% of Weequahic's White homeowners were in the affirmative, while 30% disagreed. The percentage of Weequahic residents in favor of restrictive covenants is consistent with Newark's other middle class communities, suggesting that the market imperatives to preserve property values undergirded racial attitudes against African Americans.⁵⁵ Complicating this picture are the responses of White homeowners disaggregated by religion. While a clear majority of Protestant and Catholic homeowners accepted restrictive covenants, Newark's Jews were more or less divided on the issue, with 43% assenting to covenants and 45% disapproving

⁵³ *Human Relations News from the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations* Vol. 2, No.1, October 1957.

⁵⁴ *A City in Transition*, Table 193.

⁵⁵ In middle class Forest Hill/Silver Lake 63% yes and 29% no; in Vailsburg 66% yes and 24% no; Roseville 66% yes and 22% no. Interestingly, in communities with significant numbers of Black families, the majority of respondents did not agree with the use of restrictive covenants. For a discussion of the discourse of race, property values, and market behavior, see David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy & White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

them.⁵⁶ There was no consensus on the exclusion of blacks. That stated, the communities that saw the most significant increase in African American presence also had significant numbers of residents who believed that their property values were changing for the worse.⁵⁷ Weequahic and neighboring Clinton Hill saw the greatest influx of Black residents. In Weequahic, one-third of the respondents believed their property values were decreasing, while ten percent of the residents believed that their property values were increasing, and 46% believed they were “Staying about the same”. Across Hawthorne Avenue in the Clinton Hill section, 43% of White homeowners believed that home values were in decline, while eleven percent of White homeowners believed their property values were increasing and 38% believed they were not changing. Since a great number of Clinton Hill’s white and Jewish residents moved into Weequahic as Blacks migrated into Clinton Hill from the Central Ward, it is clear to see why the fear of Black incursion became so great in Weequahic. Movements to peripheral neighborhoods during the years of increased black in-migration suggest an aversion to racial integration.

There were Jews committed to preserving the integrity of their communities in partnership with the African Americans in the South Ward. Stanley Winters, a history professor at the Newark College of Engineering (presently New Jersey Institute of Technology), along with Stanley Aronowitz, co-founded the Clinton Hill Neighborhood

⁵⁶ *A City in Transition*, Table 5. To be sure, Jews lived in Weequahic, Clinton Hill, and a smaller contingent persisted in the Central Ward.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Table 197. It should be noted that this table lists all of Newark residential communities except for the Central Ward and the Central Business District, probably because by the time the survey was taken these communities had an insignificant number of White homeowners.

Council (CHNC) in 1950 as an organized response to neighborhood change that was wrought by slum clearance.⁵⁸ The Council, composed of block associations that made up the Clinton Hill district, aimed to maintain the physical plant of homes; improve school facilities; foster intergroup understanding and cooperation; and preserve the health, sanitation, and safety of the community. CHNC brought resident concerns to municipal officials, held residents accountable to maintaining their properties, and researched responses to municipal failures to effectively address community change. CHNC was not given to silence.

One person who was not silent about changes in the South Ward was Lee Johnson. In 1959, Johnson began writing the weekly column “Inside Newark” for the *New Jersey Afro-American*.⁵⁹ The idea for the column was born out of the changes in Clinton Hill and Weequahic. The author moved to Newark’s Clinton Hill Section in 1950, and over the course of nine years became involved the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council. They began to organize because “the lifting of rent controls in the late 1950s had set off a wave of rent gouging and apartment subdivision in the Clinton Hill section just as hundreds of families, mainly black, were being displaced by crude bulldozing policies of the Newark Housing Authority in the Central Ward.”⁶⁰ Johnson was pressed to address these matters because he believed the “city’s emphasis seemed to focus on downtown big business needs rather than those of the residential communities.”⁶¹ Readers of the Lee

⁵⁸ Kevin Mumford, *Newark: a History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York, NYU Press, 2007), 87.

⁵⁹ The Inside Story of “Inside Newark”- a Brief Introduction, September 1993. Box 3, The Stanley B. Winters Papers, NPL.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Johnson's weekly column believed that Johnson was a Negro. Lee Johnson was the nom de plume of Stanley Winters. No one knew of this ruse save for the editors at the *New Jersey Afro-American*.

Why did Stanley Winters take the penname Lee Johnson? This was not politics in blackface. The idea for "Inside Newark" emerged from Winter's work with the Citizens Committee for Better Group Relations. Winters' affectation for Lee Johnson was of a middle-class Negro whose political beliefs were dynamic enough to comprehend the tensions in black politics. This dynamism was not an indicator of philosophical ambiguity, but rather political dexterity. He was pragmatic. Winters perceived that Newark's political establishment doubled down on racist discourses, which made urban, black, poor, and slum transposable terms in the post-War period. As Lee Johnson, Winters exposed the utility of such discourses to business interests.

As Lee Johnson, Stanley Winters exposed the persons responsible for undermining Newark's economic and social infrastructure. He was especially critical of NHA executive director Louis Danzig, assailing Danzig and the NHA for their gross indifference to the needs of African Americans and the city. Johnson also weighed in on multiple issues that related to Civil Rights and the city. Johnson was notably critical of black leadership. In a March 4, 1961 column titled "'Our leaders sell out too cheaply'", Johnson described black leaders who initially champion the causes for Newark's black and poor residents but 'sell-out' to political munificence. "When they are young and on the rise, they march in the front ranks. They are the most active, forthright fighters for freedom and equality."⁶² After a while, however, agitation turns into pacification. "Then something happens... At meetings when militant demands for action are voiced, they

⁶² Lee Johnson, "'Our leaders sell out too cheaply,'" *New Jersey Afro-American*, March 4, 1961.

move that a committee be formed “to study the question.””⁶³ While he does not specify particular persons, his critique was more than likely talking about Central Ward Councilmen Irvine Turner who was supportive of Danzig, slum clearance, and urban renewal in the Central Ward.

Through *Inside Newark*, Winters sounded calls for popular participation against Newark’s political machine. Winters analyzed the esoteric idiom of federal, state, and municipal policies and practices and rehashed it for a lay audience. He announced dates and times of Newark’s Council Meetings and public hearings and implored his readers to attend. These efforts paid off. In 1962, Winters and the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council successfully blocked a slum clearance project that NHA planned for Clinton Hill. The plan called for the razing of a 14-block area in Lower Clinton Hill, an area that contained two and three family homes populated mostly by African Americans. The displaced families would have been moved to one of the high-rise projects in the Central Ward, or forced to find homes in other parts of Clinton Hill or in neighboring Weequahic.⁶⁴ Despite this small victory Jews, and even middle class Blacks, continued to leave Clinton Hill and Weequahic. Indeed, many were forced to leave because of the cities urban renewal plans. Lee Johnson’s column “*Inside Newark*” ran for five years.

Winters situated the struggles of black Newarkers as one of the multiple fronts in the Civil Rights Movement, thus casting racial and class discrimination as a national problem, not just a Southern one. In Winters’ estimation, Jim Crow was present in Newark. In a June 29, 1961 column, Johnson/Winters posed a quandary: “While courageous men and women are blazing new frontiers for democracy in the South, is

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Lee Johnson, “Plan board hearing opened eyes of many,” *The New Jersey Afro-American*, July 15, 1961.

democracy being threatened in the North?”⁶⁵ In an essay titled “Urban Renewal and Civil Rights,” Winters cast urban renewal as the core problem confronting African Americans in the Civil Rights era. Under the guise of development, public and private interests were responsible for with the destruction of African American community institutions and bodies of social organization like, “community centers, street corner haunts, churches, and various informal mechanisms of social control and... the political organizations with their network of fraternal and defensive relations.”⁶⁶ More, the forced dislocation of African Americans from slum clearance areas, like a 20th century *trail of tears*, helped preserve “poverty, deprivation, and inequality,” as African Americans were increasingly resegregated in newer ghettos, thus forestalling the promises of integration as stipulated in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.⁶⁷

The patterns of segregation could be seen in the movement of Jews across Weequahic, as they began to trek further south and west as more African Americans moved in. In 1954, the Jewish Community Council of Essex County released a report titled “Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on 54 Major Streets in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey”.⁶⁸ Clustering the streets into a triad shows that Jews were moving south and west, away from the neighborhoods that abutted Clinton

⁶⁵ Lee Johnson, “Is urban renewal plan threat to democracy?” *New Jersey Afro-American*, June 29, 1961.

⁶⁶ Winters, “Urban Renewal and Civil Rights,” *Studies on the Left* 4 No. 3 (Summer 1964): 22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁸ Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on 54 Major Streets in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey, 1947-1954, December 28, 1954, box 4606, folder 1, Population Date: Correspondence 1954-1957. JHS. See Tables 2-4.

Hill.⁶⁹ The cluster of streets in Upper Weequahic closest to Clinton Hill saw a net loss of 791 Jewish families. The group of streets between Upper and Lower Weequahic saw a net loss of 41 Jewish families. Lower Weequahic, the outermost community in the South Ward saw a net gain of 425 Jewish families. To be sure, there were Jewish families leaving the old Third Ward, Clinton Hill, and other communities in Newark and moving into Weequahic, but there was also internal movement within the southernmost community. Of the whites residents that moved to their address in Weequahic between 1949 and 1959, 27% previously lived in another section of Weequahic and 29% were from Clinton Hill.⁷⁰ This further indicates that Jews were moving further out from the core communities of Newark, communities that were increasingly populated by African Americans. The fact that the JCC compiled these stats suggests that the shifts in Weequahic warranted attention. More precisely, they were troubled by these developments and took steps to make sure that Weequahic would remain a Jewish community.

Committee for Changing Neighborhoods

In April 1955, the Community Relations Committee (CRC) of the Jewish Community Council met to discuss the transitions taking place in the South Ward. Members of the organization formed the Committee for Changing Neighborhoods (CCN)

⁶⁹ Upper Weequahic, Upper/Lower Weequahic, and Lower Weequahic make up the triad. Recall Upper Weequahic is the neighborhood closest to Clinton Hill and Lower Weequahic is closer to Weequahic Park and the Union County border. See Chapter 3.

⁷⁰ Mayor's Commission on Group Relations "Table 8 – Previous Place of Residence of White Respondents Who Moved to Their Present Address in the Last Ten Years" *Newark: A City In Transition* (Newark, NJ: Market Planning Corporation, 1959).

**Table 2 - Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on Major Streets
in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey, 1947-1954**

			Absolute	Percentage
Upper Weequahic	1947	1954	+/-	+/-
Ridgewood Avenue	174	60	-114	-65.6
Jeliff Avenue	95	53	-42	-44.3
Badger Avenue	64	36	-28	-43.8
Watson Avenue	114	70	-44	-38.6
Belmont Avenue	526	349	-177	-34.9
Chadwick Avenue	89	60	-29	-32.6
Seymour Avenue	371	259	-112	-30.2
Peshine Avenue	74	55	-19	-25.7
Hillside Avenue	347	262	-85	-24.5
Johnson Avenue	340	266	-74	-21.8
Hunterdon Street	115	92	-23	-20
Osborne Terrace	222	190	-32	-14.5
Bock Avenue	58	51	-7	-12.1
Milford Avenue	175	163	-12	-6.9
Hawthorne Avenue	185	186	1	0.5
Yates Avenue	33	39	6	18.1
Totals	2982	2191	-791	

**Table 3 - Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on Major Streets
in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey, 1947-1954**

Upper/Lower Weequahic	1947	1954	Absolute +/-	Percentage +/-
Bergen Street	86	56	-30	-34.9
Meeker Avenue	69	55	-14	-20.3
Hunterdon Street	115	92	-23	-20
Leslie Street	287	235	-52	-18.2
Custer Avenue	142	128	-14	-9.9
Lehigh Avenue	309	296	-13	-4.3
Renner Avenue	253	251	-2	-0.8
Scheerer Avenue	150	148	-2	-0.8
Nye Avenue	66	67	1	1.5
Goodwin Avnue	198	206	8	4
Mapes Avenue	291	308	17	5.8
Huntington Terrace	224	255	31	13.8
Elizabeth Avenue	155	207	52	33.5
Totals	2345	2304	-41	

Table 4 - Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on Major Streets in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey, 1947-1954

Lower Weequahic	1947	1954	Absolute +/-	Percentage +/-
Lyons Avenue	239	226	-13	-5.5
Weequahic Avenue	235	223	-12	-5.2
Maple Avenue	29	28	-1	-3.5
Pomona Avenue	209	211	2	0.9
Keer Avenue	237	241	4	1.6
Vassar Avenue	169	173	4	2.3
Van Velsor Place	75	79	4	5.3
Hansbury Avenue	132	148	16	12.1
Parkview Terrace	39	44	5	12.8
Goldsmith Avenue	314	377	63	20
Schuyler Avenue	195	241	46	23.5
Chancellor Avenue	187	256	69	36.8
Fabyan Place	49	69	20	40.8
Schley Street	148	279	131	88.5
Shephard Avenue	93	180	87	93.5
Totals	2350	2775	425	

Source: Comparison of Numbers of Jewish Families residing on 54 Major Streets in Weequahic Area, Newark, New Jersey, 1947-1954, December 28, 1954, box 4606, folder 1, Population Date: Correspondence 1954-1957

to discuss the Jewish exodus from Weequahic and Clinton Hill.⁷¹ The CCN organized to discuss the changing neighborhood and its impact on Jewish stability in Weequahic. The name of the committee is intriguing, and indeed the approach that the committee chairman sought suggests that the participants met to discuss what sociologists Park and Burgess called succession.⁷² The meeting took place, not in Newark, but at committee

⁷¹ Minutes of Meeting, Committee of Changing Neighborhoods, Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Community Council of Essex County, April 19, 1955, box 4606, folder 1, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ. Alan Lowenstein created the Jewish Community Council in 1945. Lowenstein, along with Michael Stavitsky, created an organizational structure under which Essex County Jewish bodies like synagogues, women's groups, and Jewish educational institutions operated, thus created an integrated corporation that addressed the needs of Newark area Jews. The Community Relations Council was an auxiliary of the JCC that addressed Jewish concerns with non-Jewish groups. William Helmreich, *The Enduring Community*, 34, 225.

⁷² Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, sociologists at the University of Chicago, introduced the concept of succession in their sociological analysis of city in the 1920s. Park and Burgess' work was foundational to

chairman Dr. Alan Herman's home in the Essex County suburb of West Orange. The participants discussed the social dynamics of community change, but they did not address the root, structural causes of community change.

Dr. Herman began the meeting by contextualizing the changes that were taking place in Weequahic and other neighborhoods in Essex County. "The three chief changes," which were of concern to "any human relations organization," were "changes that come about as a result of Negroes moving into formerly Jewish occupied areas, Negroes moving into former white, non-Jewish areas, and Jews moving into formerly non-Jewish areas."⁷³ Dr. Herman described, in sum ethnic succession. "The most immediate problem," Herman stated, "exists where Negroes are moving into Jewish neighborhoods."⁷⁴ This process was already underway in the South Ward. Herman suggested that succession in Newark is unique, but recognized that it occurred in other cities as well. He indicated that there should be a comparative analysis of "changes in the Weequahic and Clinton Hill areas," and "information on similar developments in other cities throughout the country." There were cases of violent reprisals against incoming Blacks, blockbusting, and panic selling, and "the loss of money to community institutions which have to move away because of changing population, and other tensions resulting

theories that undergirded urban studies and the examination of processes of assimilation in American cities. Their work drew vernacular from plant ecology, thus producing language that cast the movement of racially, ethnically, and economically distinct groups from the city to the suburbs as natural and ordered. More, as historian James Gregory explains, scholars from the "Chicago School" found "migration from farm to city became an 'uprooting,' a disruptive, disorganizing experience," for migrants, particularly those from the rural South (Gregory, 66). As such, sociological theories like succession, informed the vernacular of urban development and blight. Burgess and Park developed Concentric Circle Theory. See Robert Park and Ernest W. Burgess' *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1925). Also see St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 12-18.

⁷³ Minutes, April 19, 1955, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

from feelings of lower social status on the part of “superior” groups.”⁷⁵ Milton Stern, who was chairman of the Community Relations Committee, relayed the message that the CRC saw succession as a “major problem in Essex County.”⁷⁶ These feelings of lowered social status were couched in racial ideology of Black inferiority. Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad observes, “The racial project of making blacks the ‘thing against which normality, whiteness, and functionality have been defined,’ was foundational to the making of modern urban America.”⁷⁷ Urban America was shaped by policies that undermined cities infrastructure, and white ethnics just, like African Americans, were burdened in American ghettos. However the New Deal, along with federal housing policies like the Housing Act of 1949 created pathways for white upward mobility. Ethnic notions of Black inferiority and depravity that have roots in the antebellum slave period were used to justify obstructing African American access to those pathways of success.⁷⁸ “Liberalism,” Muhammad continues, “fueled immigrant success even as racial liberalism foundered on the shoals of black criminality.”⁷⁹ Dr. Herman framed the

⁷⁵ Ibid. For instances of violent reactions to African American entrance to white communities, see Hirsch, Sugrue. For history of blockbusting see Seligman *Block by Block*. Also see W. Edward Orser’s *Blockbusting in Baltimore: the Edmondson Village Story* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

⁷⁶ Minutes, April 19, 1955, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957.

⁷⁷ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7. The belief of lowered social status was discussed in an anonymous interview. The interviewee, who attended Weequahic schools in the 1950s and 1960s, stated that in Hawthorne Avenue Elementary School, African American students were tracked in the remedial and lower performing class while all the Jewish students were tracked in the honors and higher performing classes. African American students of varying socio-economic classes and abilities were placed into one class, segregating them from their Jewish classmates. Sherry Ortner discussed distancing as a form of “drawing boundaries.”

⁷⁸ *Ethnic Notions*, directed by Marlon Riggs, (1987; San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel), VHS.

⁷⁹ Muhammad, 13.

meeting as a dialogue about race absent an interrogation of the housing policy that identified the presence of African Americans as a problem.

There was contention about the severity of the problem. Samuel Weitzman, a lawyer, along with Martin Fox, saw the movement of Blacks into Clinton Hill and Weequahic as “an orderly process” that had been taking place “in Newark for a long time.”⁸⁰ There was a tacit understanding that housing in the Central Ward, where most of Newark’s African Americans lived, was obsolescent. More, racial restrictions stymied the possibility for African Americans to secure housing in the suburbs, save for a few, closed spaces.⁸¹ Succession, in Weitzman estimation, was a good thing, because if CRC urged Jews to stay put, it might “stop Negroes from securing better houses in better neighborhoods.”⁸² Weitzman saw Jewish egression as an opportunity for Negroes. Martin Fox explained that Jews were leaving for structural reasons, citing that Jews in Clinton Hill do not want to remain because they were paying high taxes and “the neighborhood has deteriorated.” Newark’s tax rate was increasing, there was little to no enforcement of housing codes, and city services, like sanitation and paving, were in decline. Fox described Jewish egression as a non-racial decision. Abram Barkin, who was the chairman of the Newark Citizen’s Housing Council, suggested that movements from the South Ward were both economic and racial. He said that there are many people who were “worried about Negro move-ins and resulting property losses.” They were, in his estimation, responding to market forces. Some of these people, in response, are selling

⁸⁰ Minutes, April 19, 1955, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957.

⁸¹ By in large these communities were residential enclaves near wealthy white communities that were reserved for “the help,” or African Americans who served as housekeepers, butlers, and drivers.

⁸² Ibid.

their homes on the cheap. He added that some Jews stayed and “tried to involve Negroes and their families into community activities and have invited them into their homes.”⁸³

Max Neuberger, a resident of Orange, New Jersey, pointed out that some Jews were responsible for the deterioration, in that they purchased old homes in those declining areas, “sold them to Negroes,” or “divided them into smaller units and rent them.”⁸⁴ Stern mentioned that there were cases where Jews pool their resources and purchase a property in order to prevent it “from going to Negroes.” In his estimation, “This is a responsibility which we should get into.” It is difficult to disentangle Dr. Stern’s recommendation to buy homes in order to avert black homeownership from classist and racist assumptions about African American homeownership. Indeed, he sounds a tone reflective of Karl Lindner and the Clybourne Park welcoming committee in Lorraine Hansberry’s play that dramatizes a Black family’s plight to move into white suburb, *A Raisin in the Sun*.⁸⁵ Helen Hoffman, a resident of Montclair, recognized that the neighborhood transitions were swift, and believed that it was possible “to slow up the process,” especially in those cases where Jews were selling their homes “based on the wrong information.” She underlined the general acceptance of theory of ethnic succession, reiterating that “no money will be lost if the process goes on in a gradual and decent way.” The essence of the conversation kept to the idea that Jews should not abandon their homes or claims in Weequahic.

⁸³ The group Barkan referred to was the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council. This group will be discussed later on in the chapter.

⁸⁴ Minutes, April 19, 1955, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957.

⁸⁵ As the story recounts, the Lee family purchases a home in an all-white subdivision of Clybourne Park. The Clybourne Park neighborhood committee sends Karl Lindner to the Lee’s home in Southside Chicago in order to purchase the home back from the Lee’s and prevent them from moving in. See Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* (New York: Random House, 1958), 113-119.

Weitzman reminded the group of his position, stating that African Americans, like Jews, wanted good housing, and might take exception to Jewish resolve to stay in Clinton Hill and Weequahic. Arnold Harris disputed Weitzman's point, stating that African American groups comprehend the complexities of succession and share the same stance as Jewish organizations.⁸⁶ Mr. Stern drew the meeting to a close by stating that there should be greater dialogue between community organizations and that the CRC should weigh-in on "bills pending on real estate discrimination."⁸⁷ The closed housing market limited African American owner or rental options, thus leading to concentrations of home seekers in communities like Clinton Hill and Weequahic. In the end the Committee on Changing Neighborhoods did not craft an official response to succession in the South Ward. They seemed to agree that blockbusting, panic selling, and exploitative realty practices were especially pernicious and undermined the possibility of a stable community, but the meeting concluded and CCN did not develop a definitive response to neighborhood change, nor did they articulate collective sentiment towards the increasing number of African Americans in the South Ward.

This meeting illustrates the complexity of problems that confronted the residents of Weequahic, but the meeting also shows a host of responses to community change. Attempts at integration in American cities were fraught with fear and at times hostility born out of racial animus towards blacks, and more importantly, real estate policies and practices that forswore racial and class integration. Dr. Herman's concerns over the possibility of violence were not unfounded. There were numerous episodes in Chicago

⁸⁶ The shared values between Black and Jewish organizations are not determined from this source. Subsequent sources will show that Jews organizations had a penchant for working with the Black middle class and their representative organizations.

⁸⁷ Minutes, April 19, 1955, Population Data: Correspondence 1954-1957.

and Detroit of white homeowners attacking black families that sought homes in all-white neighborhoods, as well as instances of Black families defending themselves.⁸⁸ This research has not found evidence of physical violence between Blacks and Jews in Weequahic. African Americans, who were only 2% of Weequahic's population in 1950, would be 18% by 1960. The influx of Negroes, however, led to Jewish departures from Weequahic and inevitably the loss of support for Jewish institutions, most notably synagogues. Synagogues, as community based institutions, relied heavily on the financial support of their congregants, who according to Jewish custom, lived within walking distance of their congregation. As congregants left urban communities and settled in suburban enclaves, they shifted their contributions to their local synagogue.⁸⁹ Temple B'Nai Jeshurun, which was located in the Lower Clinton Hill Section of Newark, opened a synagogue in South Orange in 1952 in order to accommodate congregants that were moving into the suburban community. The older building was used for the High Holidays. The impact of Jewish flight from Newark on Jewish institutions like synagogues was not discussed in the 1955 meeting. This suggest that the sacred concerns of the Jewish community were implicit in their discussion real estate and community, or, perhaps, secondary.

Weequahic: Troubled Eden

In June 1961, a Newark News article on Weequahic described the community as a "troubled Eden."⁹⁰ The author interviewed Lee Bernstein about the changes taking place

⁸⁸ See Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 40-99; Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis*, 231-258.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of the synagogues and "rootedness" in residential neighborhoods, see Gamm, 129-140.

in Weequahic. 1961 appeared to be watershed year Weequahic, as major events occurred, including the Newark Board of Education redistricting plan to alleviate overcrowding in city's schools, and the New Jersey State Highway Commission announced the federal government approved the alignment of Interstate 78 through Weequahic. In 1961, Bernstein was the Weequahic Community Council president and would be elected South Ward Council person in 1962. Bernstein and his family lived in Weequahic on Osborne Terrace in Upper Weequahic before moving to Hobson Street in Lower Weequahic. A Black former resident of Weequahic recalled Bernstein as a nice gentleman. Bernstein was a vociferous defender of Weequahic, but politically he was especially conservative. Historian Kevin Mumford determined that in 1968 Black Nationalists leaders campaigned against the Councilman because of his conservative voting record, which aligned with Newark's Italian American voting bloc.⁹¹ Bernstein, according to Mumford also supported the highly controversial "initiative to arm Newark police with attack dogs."⁹² His conservative leanings were not especially apparent in the early 1960s, however Weequahic's demographic shift would destabilize Bernstein's political constituency as more African Americans a fewer Jews called Weequahic home. Before claiming political office, Bernstein, through the Weequahic Community Council, attempted to halt the decline of Weequahic through community organizing. Bernstein listed four categories of problems confronting Weequahic. There were housing, schools, traffic and parking, and recreation space.⁹³ Three of those categories—housing, schools,

⁹⁰ Frank Prial, "Weequahic: Troubled Eden," *Newark News*, June 25, 1961.

⁹¹ Mumford, *Newark*, 201.

⁹² Mumford, 201.

⁹³ Prial, "Weequahic: Troubled Eden."

and traffic — provide a frames for taking a closer look at the ways Weequahic residents responded to changes. More, Bernstein’s thoughts on these problems provide starting points to consider the changes in community did not see

Housing

There is tension between ideas of preserving a Jewish community and creating and interracial one. Does pursuing one end undermine the other? Bernstein is clear in his desire to preserve a Jewish community in Weequahic. He did not seem averse to racial integration as long as destabilizing tactics like blockbusting were not deployed to gain entrance into a community. Some Weequahic Jews actively supported creating interracial communities. One resident wanted her kids to befriend children from “a variety of racial, religious and national backgrounds.”⁹⁴ She acknowledged the “value of a Jewish community working together, but she did not want it too homogenous.” But would the larger Jewish community embrace diversity?

Blockbusting, the practice of placing a Black family in a home within an all White neighborhood, spreading rumors about lowered property values and more Black families moving, and getting White homeowners to sell their homes on the cheap, was a wide spread practice in Weequahic. One such realtor whose name rings out loudly in Newark is Jordan Baris. Finding documented evidence of Baris’ business practices was elusive. Baris, who was Jewish, started his realty company in 1952.⁹⁵ Edward Cifelli, a former Newark resident recalled, “there was a general denunciation of a local real estate

⁹⁴ Minutes, October 19, 1960, Community Relations Committee, box 1901, General 1960 (1954-1961), Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ.

⁹⁵ Jordan Baris Realtors Resource Guide www.issuu.com/kenbaris/docs/jordan_baris_corp_guide/5?e=0 (accessed on November 22, 2013).

agent, Jordan Baris, who was notorious among Italian Third Ward home owners for ‘blockbusting’ as it was called.”⁹⁶ “My family and neighbors,” Cifelli recalled, “used the term to mean that Baris broke up all-white blocks by selling to black families.”⁹⁷ Cifelli’s called the blockbusting “sinister,” stating that it had the effect of “lowering property values, making the streets unsafe, and mixing the races,” as “frightened whites” sold their homes “at under market value,” followed by “re-sale to a black family at over market value.”⁹⁸

Baris operated in Weequahic, too, and many Weequahic Jews spoke his name with infamy.⁹⁹ Gladys Grauer née Barker, a longtime Weequahic resident, never met Baris, but remembered one of Baris’ realty agents, William Knight. Gladys is an African American woman. She met Solomon Grauer, who was Jewish, on a picket line in New York City. They were protesting the Taft Hartley Act of 1947, which restricted the activities of labor unions. There were mounted policemen patrolling the demonstration. Grauer saved Barker from the kick of bucking horse. His heroic deed brought them together and they were soon married. They initially moved to Clinton Hill and eventually settled in Upper Weequahic.

William Knight his family moved next door to the Grauers in 1962, becoming the second Black family in the neighborhood. Knight bought the home from the former editor of the Jewish News. Gladys recalled a conversation between Knight and Solomon.

Knight and his family were packing up and moving to Hansbury Avenue only after two

⁹⁶ Edward Martin Cifelli, *Random Miracles: A Memoir* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2009), 174.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Cifelli stated that he stunned his family when he said “black homeownership was long overdue and that black families in our neighborhood would probably be all right too” (175).

⁹⁹ Sam Convissor, interview.

years as the Grauers' neighbor. Hansbury Avenue was located in Lower Weequahic. Solomon quipped, "If you move over there, they're going to start moving out."¹⁰⁰ Knight replied, "That's my purpose."¹⁰¹ Jewish leaders in Weequahic recognized that blockbusting was a scare tactic. Leaders argued that it was in the best interest of Jewish residents, and community institutions like synagogues, to stay.¹⁰² Was William Knight a bad person? Blockbusting was not a crime, but many Jewish residents thought it a transgression against their interests. Were Knight's and Jordan Baris' purposes wholly malevolent?

Whites tended to speak pejoratively about blockbusting, but for African American residents who were excluded from less crowded communities on the pretext of race, blockbusting created opportunities, albeit ones with certain drawback. Historian Amanda Seligman observed this in Chicago. She noted that blockbusting, more than a critique of questionable sales procedures, was a catchall for real estate brokers willing "to change the city's racial boundaries."¹⁰³ As such white residents were uniform in their animus towards blockbusters, but not consistent in their sentiments against African American home seekers. Black residents "expressed more mixed attitudes toward the real estate

¹⁰⁰ Gladys Grauer, interview author, Newark, NJ, November 20, 2012.

¹⁰¹ William Knight was born in 1933 in South Carolina. He graduated from Central University in North Carolina with a Bachelor Degree in Science in 1953, and then served in the U.S. Army from six years, receiving an honorable discharge in 1960. He left Fort Bragg, North Carolina and migrated to Newark, taking a job with the Internal Revenue Service and the Post Office before working for Jordan Baris in 1962. Knight would eventually start his own realty company in 1968. (Newark News Questionnaire for William Knight, *The Newark News*, June 1970. NPL)

¹⁰² Minutes, December 7, 1960, Community Relations Committee, box 1901, General 1961 (1954-1961), Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ.

¹⁰³ Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 153.

dealers and apartment owners who made housing available at the edge of the ghetto.”¹⁰⁴

Journalist and historian Antero Pietila detailed the stories of African Americans residents in Baltimore who believed “blockbusters were good because they opened up housing opportunities for blacks,” in markets that denied them access.¹⁰⁵

Not all families Black families that settled in Weequahic secured their homes through realtors. Some were able to secure mortgages to purchase homes in Weequahic. Others saved enough money and bought homes directly from Jewish owners. William West and his wife Ruby moved into a Chadwick Avenue house they bought from the Stein family.¹⁰⁶ According to West’s daughter, Sandra, her father paid for the house with cash. Ruby and Willie were both born in rural North Carolina. Ruby nee Jackson and her family migrated to Harlem when she was very young, but then went back to North Carolina. While growing up, Jackson played the piano for her church. Willie West was born not too far from the Jackson family, his family were sharecroppers. As Sandra recalls, her mother and father were “childhood sweethearts,” but they were not supposed to get married because Ruby was a Baptist, and Willie was a Methodist. “A very prissy lady,” Ruby once told Sandra “I followed your father to the AME church, but I’ve always felt like a Baptist.” Harry and Yacob Stein, the former owners of the West’s Chadwick Avenue home, had one stipulation for the sale: the buyers had to be religious people. Willie and Ruby West met the criterion. They were Sunday school teachers at St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Wests were a middle class family. Ruby West,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 185.

¹⁰⁶ Sandra West, interview with author, May 11, 2009, Newark, NJ.

who received her degree from the New York School of Dietetics, worked as dietitian at Beth Israel Hospital. Willie West, after serving time in the armed forces during World War II, went to tailoring school, but eventually took a job working for General Motors. Interestingly, the Stein's daughter became the Wests' tenant, renting the first floor apartment. She stayed there until the mid-1970s and only moved because she needed more space to accommodate her growing family. On a personal, individualized level, there were efforts by Blacks and Jews to maintain an interracial community.

Education

Bernstein asserted that problems in Weequahic schools were the result of overcrowding in community. He pointed out that overcrowding occurred when landlords partitioned single and two family homes into three and four family homes, thus increasing the potential number of students in a school district. He also stated that blockbusting and panic selling fostered the creation of racially segregated schools. He was partially right.

Nadaline Dworkin was the chair of the WCC Education Committee in the early 1960s. She actively confronted educational inequalities in Weequahic schools. Her particular block association, the Stengel Avenue-Porter Place Neighborhood Association started in 1956 and succeeded in averting the influence blockbusters and panic selling. Nadaline's children attended Maple Avenue School, one of the city's better performing middle schools. In contrast to Maple Avenue, many of the city's majority Black middle and high schools were over crowded; older and dilapidated; staffed a disproportionate amount of substitute teachers; lacked up-to-date text books; and because of a 1961

redistricting plan that maintained an all-White school zones in the North Ward, operated on a split day schedule.¹⁰⁷ Thousands of African American students were forced onto split-day sessions where one half of the school attended classes for four hours in the morning and the other half of the students attended classes in the afternoon. Split-day sessions shortened the school day and did not reduce overcrowding. More, it presented problems to parents who worked during the day and were not home to supervise their children who attended the earlier session.

The Newark Board of Education (NBE) authorized the operation of a dichotomous school system that served white students and underserved the growing population of African American students. Education researcher Jean Anyon analyzed operations of NBE during the 1950s and 60s, and found that it was a well of patronage and mismanagement.¹⁰⁸ Members of the city council doled out jobs to their constituents, many of whom were unqualified. Hundreds of thousands of dollars intended for facility improvements and academic supplies were lost. More, the Board discounted the concerns of Black parents, but was particularly responsive to white parents.¹⁰⁹ White parents were allowed to transfer their children from majority black schools to majority white schools in other neighborhoods. In 1960, the Board redistricted elementary schools in order to preserve the racial make-up of a White elementary and high schools. This plan led to increased the enrollments in predominantly Black schools, creating the overcrowded conditions that Bernstein lamented.

¹⁰⁷ See Jean Anyon's *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1997), 75-98.

¹⁰⁸ Anyon, 85-89.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 93.

Groups concerned about the academic development of Newark students recognized that municipal leadership was leaving Black and Puerto Rican children behind. Representing the interests of concerned parents in Newark's South Ward, the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council's Education Committee issued a statement to the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, "We believe that children are being graduated from our neighborhood schools without the basic equipment of literacy needed to enable them to cope with life's problems, and even further, to enable them to better their material situation in later life and contribute meaningfully to American society."¹¹⁰ There were significant disparities between resources provided to schools, even in Weequahic. Peshine Avenue School, located near the northeastern border of Weequahic and Clinton Hill, was overcrowded and in need of an upgrade to its physical plant.¹¹¹ Students at Maple Avenue School, in contrast, attended a full day schedule and their classrooms were not overcapacity. As a matter of fact, the classrooms were at less than full capacity.

The Federal Housing Administration's Depression era racial provisions that banned "inharmonious racial groups" from homogenously white neighborhoods and spurned interracial schools continued to influence housing market trends in the post-*Kraemer* and post-*Brown* era Real Estate brokers sold houses in Weequahic in ways that preserved the racial composition of elementary and middle schools. Through the early 1960s, realtors sold Blacks homes only in communities North of Lyons Avenue, and sold

¹¹⁰ "Statement By Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council Education Committee, to be delivered before the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations," Sept. 16, 1959, Stanley Winters Papers, Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ.

¹¹¹ Gladys Grauer, interview. According to Sherry Ortner, Peshine Avenue School, which "verged on poorer neighborhoods in which other racial and ethnic groups predominated," was considered a middle status school. Maple Avenue, "where the population was almost entirely white and Jewish," was a higher status school (43). See Ortner, 43-44.

homes to Jews in communities South of Lyons.¹¹² “They called it an integrated community,” jibed Gladys Grauer. Most of Weequahic’s African American students attended either Peshine or Hawthorne Elementary School. Maple Avenue and Chancellor Avenue schools were mostly Jewish schools. There was a range of responses to the overcrowding and split sessions at the mostly Black elementary schools. Gladys Grauer recalled that some of the Black parents did not want to be involved in any kind of fight and elected to send their kids to private schools. The Newark Branch of the NAACP opposed the plan because it would increase segregation. In the South Ward, 161 students at Hawthorne Avenue School would be transferred to Peshine Avenue School.¹¹³ These schools were located on the periphery of the Weequahic section. At the beginning of the 1963 school year, the student body at Peshine Avenue School was ninety-six percent Black. At Hawthorne Avenue School, the percentage was seventy-four percent. Some of the parents kept their children home in protest to the measure. Representatives of the mostly Black parents of Hawthorne Avenue School argued, “that distributing the children among the three schools in Weequahic section would create a better racial balance.”¹¹⁴ The district proposed a plan to bus South Ward kids to less crowded and White schools in other parts of the city.¹¹⁵ Gladys Grauer recalled attending a PTA meeting with her husband when the bussing plan was discussed. The plan called for Black kids from

¹¹² Benilde Little, interview with author, Montclair, NJ, November 15, 2012. Little, a former resident of Weequahic, related Weequahic’s racially divided housing market in, both in an interview and in her novel *Good Hair* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), a story that explores the clash of class and privilege amongst upwardly mobile African Americans. “Realtors wouldn’t sell houses to Blacks beyond Lyons Avenue, which was the entrance to the Weequahic Park area, where English Tudors and large Dutch colonials were set back from the maple-lined streets called Vassar and Goldsmith (24).

¹¹³ “Newark is Firm on School Order,” *The New York Times*, September 14, 1963, 11.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Gladys Grauer, interview.

Peshine Avenue School to be bussed to Speedway Avenue Elementary School, a majority White school in the West Ward of Newark:

My husband said ‘That’s great.’ They had this thing all set up and they were going to do a lottery, and they were going to bus kids ... and I think they pulled one of my daughter’s names... and my husband said ‘Oh, that’s fine. She’s going to go to Speedway.’ He said [to the Board of Education President], ‘how many children are you going to bring from Speedway over to Peshine?’ The president of the Board of Education said ‘We’re not bussing them over here.’ ‘Well then you’re not bussing my kid! If you’re not going to bring some White kids over here then you’re not taking mine over there.’ He had no plans on her going anyway.¹¹⁶

The redistricting plan was designed to ease overcrowding in Newark’s schools, including Weequahic High School and Clinton Place Junior High School.¹¹⁷ Nadaline Dworkin, WCC Education Committee Chair, along with another Weequahic resident, Estelle Greenburg, devised a plan of direct action to create integrated schools in Weequahic. In 1963, Dworkin, before an audience of women at the Weequahic branch of the Newark Public Library, stated, “integration is the accepted morality of our nation. We have to live according to our morality rather than just speak about it. There is a human need for every person to live a life full of opportunity.” Peshine Avenue School had class sizes ranging from thirty to thirty-five students. Maple Avenue School had class sizes of ten to fifteen students.

The Jewish Community Council issued press release in August 1963 on the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. It stated, “Participation in peaceful demonstrations for the redress of grievances has long been a characteristically American

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ “Segregation is Laid to Newark Schools,” *The New York Times*, May 28, 1961, 38.

way.”¹¹⁸ The JCC expressed, “hope that the largest possible number of Essex County Jews will utilize that way to help achieve a better life for all our citizens in this centennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.” In that spirit of redressing grievances, Dworkin and Greenberg organized a sit-in where Weequahic’s Black students would attend class at the less crowded and racially segregated Maple Avenue School.¹¹⁹ The women canvassed the classrooms taking notes on the grade-level and the number of empty seats in each class. They then contacted the parents of African American children who were willing to send their kids to the less crowded classrooms at Maple Avenue. They hatched their plan, much to the vexation of the principal, who proceeded to call the parents of the Jewish children. The mothers of Maple Avenue’s enrolled students hastily ran to the school in their nightgowns, slippers, and hair rollers. Someone, perhaps the principle, called the Newark Police Department. Grauer recalled the Maple Avenue School sit-in with mirth, but the significance of direct action in Weequahic cannot be dissociated from the Civil Rights Movement and acts of non-violent protest in the South. Indeed, Dworkin’s actions, and the responses of the Jewish mothers call attention to dissonances emanating from Jewish support of Civil Rights causes, and the Jewish resistance to residential and educational integration. More, it interrupts narratives that cast the Civil Rights Movement as a phenomenon of the American South, and histories that narrowly construe the North as solely the base for more militant Black Nationalism.

Jewish leadership expressed concern about the retreat from interracialism. In an April 1963 Community Relations Committee meeting, Benjamin Epstein described

¹¹⁸ “Jewish News Release,” August 23, 1963. Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest.

¹¹⁹ Gladys Grauer, interview.

Jewish trepidations over the increased presence of African Americans in Weequahic.¹²⁰ Epstein, who was a science teacher and eventual principal at Weequahic High School, would become an assistant superintendent of Newark Public School.¹²¹ Four months before the March on Washington, and Rabbi Prinz and Dr. King's speeches calling for mutuality and the removal of racial and economic barriers, Epstein testified to a "tremendous hysteria and fright in the Jewish community," because "Negroes are associated with increased crime and other signs of poverty and deprivation."¹²² Epstein pointed out that in September 1962 ninety Jewish children were supposed to register at Weequahic High School, but failed to show up, while ninety-eight of 130 new registrants were Negro. He continued:

Many Negro children are not adaptable to middle class cultural standards as a result of their subjection to prejudice, discrimination and deprivation. There is a very high level of disregard for public property, of vandalism, stealing and violence... The attitude prevalent among Jews is that within two to six years the area served by Weequahic High School will be totally Negro and therefore the average Jew wants to get out now, but will wait until his children graduate.

Epstein continued, stating "rumors and misstatements of facts are rampant," including misleading reports of increased crime. "The ground is fertile for panic." After a "lively discussion," the CRC made tentative recommendations, including pushing for open occupancy throughout Newark and the surrounding suburbs in order to avert residential segregation. They also suggested service and community supports to "overcome past deprivations." Would Weequahic Jews embrace interracialism and challenge the status quo by subverting the very structures that allowed them to appropriate Whiteness?

¹²⁰ Minutes of the Community Relations Committee, April 18, 1963, box 1902, Weequahic Area Committee (Newark, NJ) 1963-1964, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ.

¹²¹ "Philip Roth Shakes Weequahic High," *The New York Times*, February 28, 1969; Grover. *Nazis in Newark* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 37.

¹²² Minutes, April 18, 1963, Weequahic Area Committee (Newark, NJ) 1963-1964.

In the mid-1960s the possibility of the Jewish community proffering more than symbolic gestures towards Civil Rights seemed unlikely. There were leaders in the ranks of the Jewish Community Council of Essex County that were committed to both maintaining the Jewish community in Weequahic and supporting Civil Rights and upwardly mobility for Blacks. They were also aware of the perfunctory nods to equality. A member of the CRC recounted such superficiality at a meeting attended by seven hundred Jews.¹²³ Hundreds of the attendees bought “equality buttons,” but merely seven attendees signed a petition for open occupancy in the real estate market. Another member believed that the Jewish community was not necessarily fearful of “the middle class or upper class Negro.” Rather, the “economic differential between the lower class Negro group and the white middle class,” was “a source of fear and conflict.”¹²⁴ This explanation does not obviate the harm done to African American interests. It fails to acknowledge the destabilizing impact of slum clearance. It did not afford critical attention to discriminatory practices of the FHA and of savings and loans, or of the exploitative practices of realtors and slumlords that FHA and banking practices fostered. These systemic problems siphoned off resources from black families. More, it disregarded the ways in which members of the Jewish community engaged in practices that encumbered African American aspirations, irrespective of their class standing.

There were many instances when these contradictions arose. Take for instance the experiences of Thom McCloud, an African American male who grew up on the periphery

¹²³ Minutes, March 30, 1964, box 1902, Weequahic Area Committee: Sub-committee on Urban-Suburban Relations I, 1964, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

of Weequahic on Tillinghast Street in Upper Weequahic. His father, who worked for a railroad company purchased the family's home. His mother worked as a stay at home mom, and sold Avon products to her parishioners at her church for extra money. Thom was the youngest of thirteen children, and was a popular student at Weequahic High, partly because of his exploits in athletics. His family got along well with their Jewish neighbors. Thom recalled the Jewish plumber who did any number of repairs in his family's home for free, and the times when his mother would drop off five shirts at the Jewish owned cleaners and was only charged for four. There was a sense of mutuality in his neighborhood. That sentiment did not always manifest itself in public spaces like the schools or on the streets of Lower Weequahic.

McCloud recalled some interesting exchanges with faculty members at his middle and high school. On one occasion, he and some of his Jewish friends were standing around talking and a teacher walked up to him and said, "You look like a good worker. Come here I want to talk to you." She proceeded to ask him do yard work around her home, all the while calling him her "boy". On another occasion, a Weequahic High School guidance counselor, an older Jewish woman, recommended that McCloud should work with his hands instead of going of college.¹²⁵ In a more heinous incident, McCloud recalled when Newark Police arrested him and four of his Jewish friends. McCloud friends had finished playing basketball and went to Burgerama, a burger joint near the

¹²⁵ Thom McCloud, interview with author, Prince Georges County, MD, October 5, 2012. Thom went into military service before attending college. After he graduated, he started a masters degree program. He also worked for Rutgers Newark as a recruiter. On a recruiting visit to his alma mater, he met the guidance counselor who tried to dissuade him from attending college. He recalled that she did not recognize him. After the presentation he reminded her of her recommendation, he told her "in a matter of a few weeks I will have my masters degree. Do you have yours yet?" McCoy chuckled, "And her mouth just dropped open."

Weequahic High School. He recalled a scene straight out of the 1970s television sitcom, *Happy Days*.¹²⁶

That was the thing. That's what the white kids did. They went to Burgerama and they hung around. They got in their cars and just drove up and down Chancellor Avenue because they had nothing else to do.¹²⁷

A Weequahic Alumnus remembered scenes where, "Vintage cars like the 62 Oldsmobile Spitfire, 1957 and 1958 Chevys roamed up and down the street passing The Bunny Hop, The Burgerama and Daves Hot Dog Haven."¹²⁸ After they ate, McCloud and his friends stood outside the burger joint and "palled around."¹²⁹ A few of his white female classmates joined them. "Next thing you know, the cops were there." The officers questioned the group, told them that there were laws against loitering, and took McCloud and his four friends to the local precinct. The officer released the four white students not long after they arrived, but McCloud was placed in a holding cell. Later that night, McCloud's father, fresh from work still dressed in his coveralls and work boots, went to the precinct to pick up his youngest son. He walked into lobby, placed his lunch pail upon the desk sergeant's counter, and asked, "You got my boy here? Let him go." The officers released McCloud without filing any paper work and no charges were imposed. McCloud's encounter with Newark police was both typical and unusual. The Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder, the committee charged with determining the causes of the July 1967 civil uprisings, found that in the years before the riots "Poor and

¹²⁶ *Happy Days* Paramount Television.

¹²⁷ Thom McCloud, interview.

¹²⁸ Aron Wallad, "What a Great Night," articlesnatch.com. www.articlesnatch.com/Article/What-A-Great-Night/14782# (accessed on November 28, 2013)

¹²⁹ Thom McCloud, interview.

middle-class Negroes alike complained about police brutality and verbal abuse.”¹³⁰ Police harassment and brutality against African Americans was common, and according to the Commission almost half of all Blacks polled stated that the police were too brutal, compared to only five percent of whites.¹³¹

In similar ways, Interstate 78 did violence to Weequahic. The stakes were very clear. The construction of Interstate 78 would destroy over 800 homes and businesses, and displace upwards of 10,000 residents. The construction costs for the highway were staggering, but they would be paid. The shame and crime of the razing of Upper Weequahic for I-78 was that there were alternative routes, and those routes were estimated to be less expensive. Construction costs for I-78 were estimated to be over \$320 million. The costs for Weequahic residents whose homes were in the path of the highway were also staggering, and many would remain unpaid. Economist Anthony Downs, asserts that there are economic and social costs of displacement that require residents in the path of highways to make “personal sacrifices” for the “good of the public,” and “the beneficiaries of individual public projects.”¹³²

The Newark Housing Authority, under the auspices of the Housing Act of 1949 and 1954, forcibly moved Black Central Ward residents from their homes and relocate into the South Ward, overcrowding an already densely populated community. Public

¹³⁰ Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder, *Report for Action* (State of New Jersey, 1968), 35.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³² Anthony Downs, “Uncompensated Nonconstruction Costs Which Urban Highways and Urban Renewal Impose Upon Residential Households,” *The Analysis of Public Output*, ed. Julius Margolis (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1970), 70. Downs categorizes these sacrifices as “The Kinds of Losses Imposed Upon Residential Households by Urban Highway and Urban Renewal Projects (Other Than Paying For Construction Costs). These “losses fall under three categories: A. Losses Imposed Upon Residential Households By Displacement Itself; B. Losses Imposed Upon Residential Households by Uncertainties and Delays; and C. Losses Imposed Upon Residential Households Not Directly Displaced But Located in Surrounding Areas.”

housing did little to lessen the burden of displacement. Weequahic, along with Clinton Hill, suffered because of it. It created a market for unprincipled property owners to draw exorbitant rents from Black tenants. Urban renewal undermined an already outmoded housing infrastructure to the benefit of Newark's business community and their interests in Newark's central business district. Rather than halting blight, the effects of urban renewal expanded the borders of the second ghetto into Newark's private housing market.

The private housing market in Weequahic was in decline, partly because of the demographic shifts. Jewish residents with the means to relocate, often settling in the Essex and Morris County suburbs. The increasing number of African Americans into the South Ward compelled the remaining Jews to consider its relationship to African Americans, especially in light of the support from segments of the Jewish community for anti-racist causes. Through their deliberations, however, Weequahic Jews failed to account for the structural causes of community decline. Slum clearance increased overcrowding. Newark's public schools, along with other municipal services, declined because of administrative sloppiness and willful negligence. Federal appropriations for city residents never met their intended mark. Weequahic, and indeed all of residential Newark, was compelled to make "sacrifices" for the good of the metropolis.

In fact, sacrifice is an imprecise referent. Uncompensated costs better encapsulates the toll wrought upon Newark residents. This chapter examined how urban renewal exacted uncompensated costs from Central Ward residents. It showed the negative impact of displacement and municipal neglect on Weequahic. The next chapter examines how metropolitan development, through highway construction, also wrested

uncompensated costs from Weequahic residents and hastened the decline of a neighborhood.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEBTS AND DEBTORS Duplicity and the Uncompensated Costs of Metropolitan Development

Newark lay at the center of an expanding metropolis, and despite the significant loss of residential population and industry, remained a major commercial center. The Mayor's Commission on Changing Populations found that despite the demographic shifts, "whites are more likely than the Negroes to work in Newark proper."¹ What is more, many people that worked in the city did not even live in the city. Newark Airport and Port Newark, as terminals of travel and trade, were under expansion and would see increases in fares and freight.² By 1959, according to the Brookings Institute, Newark's daytime population increased to 102% of its nighttime population, making it the most commuted-to city in the United States.³ With 484,000 persons entering the city on a given weekday and ninety percent of those persons arriving by car or bus, city, state, and federal officials discussed the possibility of building a high speed highway that would ease traffic for both terminal and through traffic in Newark. The proposed "Newark Loop" would connect local freeways with the interstate highways, thus speeding the flow

¹ Newark Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation, *Urban Renewal Plan: a Demonstration Grant Project: Delineation of Areas, 2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959), II-31-II-32. The Mayor's Commission on Group Relations drafted the *Mayor's Commission on Changing Populations*. The Commission on Group Relations was founded in 1952 following then Newark Mayor Ralph Villani's request for United States President Harry Truman to issue an executive order "prohibiting discrimination in defense industries and government and establish a committee for fair employment practices." ("Mayor Urges FEPC Order," *The Afro American*, July 7, 1951, 6.) In a proclamation that highlighted Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 which called for the elimination of discrimination in defense industries during World War II, Mayor Villani declared June 25 Fair Employment Day in Newark (Ibid). It should be noted that Villani's declaration occurred under the Commission form of governance. Charter change in 1954 may have weakened the influence of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., II-26.

of commuter travel into Newark. It factored into the Central Planning Boards schema for a “New Newark”. The Loop included Interstate 280 in the North, a Mid-Town Connector that would run through the Central Ward, and Route 21 that would run down the eastern portion of the loop. The proposed Interstate 78 would make up the Southern Freeway, which was slated to run through the Weequahic Section (See Figure 7.1).

The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways Law, in addition to the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, would have significant impacts on Weequahic and the city of Newark. President Dwight Eisenhower signed the law on June 29, 1956, which received overwhelming support from both the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Through Title I of the Federal Aid Highway Act, the federal government was on the tab for \$25 billion for the construction of roads between 1957 and 1969. Similar to Title I of the 1949 Housing Act subsidies for slum clearance, the federal government assumed the larger share of land acquisition and road construction costs in the Highway Act, fronting ninety percent of the costs while states covered the remaining ten percent. Historian Thomas Karnes found that the great extent of federal expenditure on the Highway Act underscored the ability of Washington to design an expanse system of transportation networks that linked cities and commercial centers to the sprawling suburban communities and even manufactures that were removing from cities to suburban and rural areas in greater numbers.⁴ A unified network of highways, for Eisenhower, ensured national security. In a Cold War economy, an integrated interstate system would allow for the speed and efficient flow of people and goods, the lifeblood of capitalism. Limited access throughways helped lessen traffic congestion. Moreover, mass evacuations of

⁴ Thomas L. Karnes, *Asphalt and Politics: A History of the American Highway System* (Jefferson, NC; London: McFarland & Company, 2009), 87.

cities, the likely targets of Russian aggression, would be tragically impeded with traffic snarls. Interstate 78 was designed to be the “most direct route between New York City, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Indianapolis, and St. Louis.”⁵

To be clear, Eisenhower expected highways to bypass cities and not disrupt community integrity, but the bill would not pass Congress without votes from Representatives from urban districts.⁶ His advisors warned him not to press the issue, thus silencing any discussion on the impact of highway construction on cities at the Executive level of government. The 1961 Civil Rights Commission detailed that significant numbers of people displaced by highway construction are nonwhites.⁷ Interestingly, city planners in Newark did not look upon federal highway plans negatively. While New Jersey highway officials slated Interstate 78, the Southern Freeway portion of the loop, to be built through Weequahic, Newark’s City Council suggested that the freeway be routed north of Weequahic, which would preserve one of Newark’s most modern communities, and also advance the city’s slum clearance plans, as the highway would pass through the blighted sections of Newark.⁸ State administrators did not announce the official plans for the highway until 1961.

The New Jersey State Highway Department announced the Federal Bureau of Public Roads approved the alignment Interstate 78 on April 1961. The plans for the highway were in discussion as early as 1957, but federal funds were not available.

⁵ *Traffic and Transportation-Community Renewal Program-Newark, New Jersey* (New Haven, C.T.: Wilbur Smith and Associates, 1967) 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 1961 United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Housing* (Washington, DC, 1961) 100.

⁸ “Existing and Proposed Highways with Neighborhood Boundaries” *Urban Renewal Plan: A Demonstration Grant Project-2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959). See Figure 7.1.

Nationally, I-78 was an important highway because it provided the most direct route from New York City to St. Louis, Missouri. More, I-78 paralleled to Route 22, an older and narrower road that was the main artery into western New Jersey and Pennsylvania. 78 would siphon off traffic from the local access highway. By 1961, three sections of I-78 were already open to traffic, notably the Newark Bay Extension that ran from the Holland Tunnel to Newark Airport. It was completed in 1956. The wheels of progress were in motion. Weequahic residents did not want those wheels to tread a path through their community.

There was plenty of support for the Weequahic community, and there were early indicators that realignment around Weequahic would be realized. Four members of the Weequahic Community Council, including Lee Bernstein and Donald Payne, went to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of congress who represented constituencies threatened by highway displacement.⁹ Donald Payne grew up in Newark's North Ward and graduated from Barringer High School in 1952. After completing undergraduate and post-graduate studies, Payne moved to the South Ward where he taught English and Social Studies and coached at South Side High School.¹⁰ Payne was the first Black president of the Council of Y.M.C.A.'s. He would go on to be the first African American to be elected to Congress from New Jersey in 1988.

Payne and the WCC, while in Washington, received word that Rex Whitton, administrator of the Federal Bureau of Roads, asked the federal agency's office in Trenton to study the feasibility of Newark Mayor Carlin's and the WCC's alternative

⁹ "To Stir Up Rt. 78 Fight: Newarkers Will Take Advice of Nevada's Rep. Baring," *Newark News*, May 13, 1961.

¹⁰ Raymond Hernandez, "Donald M. Payne, First Black Elected to Congress From New Jersey, Dies at 77," *The New York Times*, March 6, 2012.

alignment plan.¹¹ Whitton's call to Trenton imparted some optimism to the WCC delegates. "Indicators are that from the way progress is being made... the highway will be rerouted to avoid the Weequahic section." They even encouraged their neighbors to paint their and spruce up their homes.¹² That optimism would soon be supplanted by frustration.

In the late spring of 1961, the WCC started a fundraising drive in the community. They placed blue collection cans bearing a white label that read "Help Save Our Homes."¹³ The funds would more than likely be used to hire a highway-planning consultant. South Ward Councilwoman Sophie Cooper happened upon one of these cans, and found out that WCC had not obtained a solicitation permit, and proceeded to shut down fund drive. Sophie Cooper came to office in 1957 after her husband Samuel, the South Ward's first council person, Samuel, unexpectedly died from a heart attack.¹⁴ She assumed South Ward leadership and ran as an incumbent in 1958. She won by over 15,000 votes.¹⁵

Cooper disapproved of the WCC's methods, stating, "that the fight against Route 78 is the responsibility of city officials," and went on to say that the WCC "was using the collection to further its own ends." The WCC had approached her about the highway the previous year. Cooper agreed to respond "pending engineering studies." Bernstein

¹¹ Mayor Carlin's Plan would have taken I-78 through Weequahic Park next to Route 22 and then through a populated area of Hillside, New Jersey. The Weequahic Community Council's Plan paralleled Route 22 through Weequahic Park as well, but continued further South into an industrial area of Hillside and along the Elizabeth River. *Newark News*, May 25, 1961; "New Rt. 78 Plan Eyed: U.S. Road Chief Asks for Good Look at Alternatives," *Newark News*, May 21, 1961.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bob Shabazian, "Fund Drive Foiled," *Newark News*, June 7, 1961.

¹⁴ "S.E. Cooper Dead; Newark Official," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1957.

¹⁵ "Mayoral Run-off is Set for Newark," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1958.

reminded Cooper of her promise. She would retreat from her previous statement about the responsibility of city council, calling for cooperative efforts between the citizens and city officials. “Action by community groups is a democratic prerogative and it is the responsibility of citizens to make their voices heard.” Cooper’s conciliatory gesture did not better matters between she and Bernstein. Sources suggest that Cooper supported the Democratic Party.¹⁶ Interestingly, Bernstein was “active in Republican circles.”¹⁷

On December 2, 1961, the WCC submitted a letter to Newark City Council president Michael Bontempo, asking the council to convene an emergency session and appropriate \$25,000 for an “impartial study” of I-78 alignment proposals.¹⁸ Bernstein and the WCC felt that a report conducted by an independent engineering firm with no ties to the state could make a more compelling, disinterested assessment of all proposed alignments. More, calling an emergency session would demonstrate to federal officials that the city was committed to routing the highway around Weequahic. Such a show, Bernstein believed, would garner WCC extra time to conduct the study. “I urge you,” Bernstein pleaded, “to join with us in keeping Route 78 out by calling an emergency session of the city government and appropriating these funds for this study.”¹⁹ The City Council convened on December 6, and proceeded and gave WCC’s appeal the “cold shoulder.”²⁰

¹⁶ Lee Johnson, “Ward Elections Had Exciting Contests,” *The New Afro-American*, June 9, 1962.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Rt. 78 Line Study Asked,” *Newark News*, December 2, 1961.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “To Consider Rt. 78 Study,” *Newark News*, December 3, 1961; “Independent Rt. 78 Study Gets City Cold Shoulder,” *Newark News*, December 7, 1961.

The City Council denied the appeal for the appropriation for an independent study. The Council stated that it showed staunch support for the Central Planning Board's proposal, which was similar to Weequahic's except the plan called for I-78 to be built through the core of Hillside. One member of the Council believed that an emergency appropriation for another study would show a lack of confidence in the Planning Board, and another councilperson called such an action "entirely inconsistent, if not repugnant."²¹ Sophie Cooper chimed in, too. She contended that support for the City's plan or the WCC plan was superfluous. What mattered is that an alternate plan was selected. She also held that WCC's plan was rejected by the State. Bernstein countered, stating that WCC's plan had not been fully reviewed, and in fact the State Highway Commission denied the City's Plan. What was most important, and needed, was an independent review of all proposals. The City Council did not even put the Weequahic Community Council's request up for a vote.

Reactions to infighting in Newark ran the gamut of support for the WCC to exasperation at the persistence of the WCC and the City Council. The New Jersey Citizens Highway Committee, a traffic safety advocacy group, called the protests against I-78 "obstructionist," and argued that "every week of delay adds to lives lost and mounting costs of congestion far in excess of right of way costs."²² Residents in the neighboring town of Hillside and their representatives were vehemently against Mayor Carlin and WCC's plans, as those proposed routes would direct the highway through their town. That past June over 2,500 residents packed Hillside's municipal building and the

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Hits Critics of Rt. 78: State Group Labels Opposition to Road 'Obstructionist,'" *Newark News*, December 31, 1962.

outside lawn to here speeches decrying alternate routes. Indeed, county and city officials, as well as Congresswoman Florence P. Dwyer forcefully registered the protests of Hillside residents. Indeed, Team Hillside's united front was the envy of Weequahic residents. Ralph Zinn, president of the Weequahic Community Council, decried the "City's failure to provide funds to combat the proposed alignment," that was "unlike efforts put forth by Hillside and Union against Route 78 and by East Orange, which succeeded in depressing the east-west freeway through that city."²³ Those cities represented the interests of their constituents. The Municipal Council's actions were different. "There is no room for factionalism in the fight against the state's proposed Route 78 alignment." The division between the WCC and the City Council makes Cooper's previous request for cooperation seem more like a demand for obsequience. Carrying the water for the Municipal Council rather than advocating her constituents' interests would haunt Cooper in the upcoming city election.

Interstate 78 was a major talking point in Newark's 1962 municipal election. Then Congressman Hugh Addonizio charged Mayor Leo Carlin with "deserting the ranks of citizens opposing the proposed alignment of Route 78."²⁴ Addonizio won the mayoral race in a landslide. At his swearing in, Addonizio affirmed an intention to save Weequahic: "Neighborhoods must not be amputated by highways."²⁵ Carlin was not the only incumbent politician to get hammered on Rt. 78. Lee Bernstein vied for Sophie Cooper's South Ward Councilperson's seat. Cooper garnered 16,500 votes in her 1958 Council run. In 1962, she only garnered 5,843 votes, while Bernstein earned 4,107.

²³ Ralph Zinn, "Route 78 Criticism," *Newark News*, December 27, 1961.

²⁴ "Addonizio Blasts Carlin on Rt. 78," *Newark News*, January 23, 1962.

²⁵ "Newark Installs Mayor Addonizio," *The New York Times*, July 2, 1962.

Stanley Winters, Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council president also ran and earned 3,436 votes . Reverend Claude Kilgore, a resident of the Central Ward, accumulated 2,282 votes. Because she didn't earn at least half of the votes in the first ballot, there was a run off between she and Bernstein. Lee Johnson reported on the municipal election in the June 6, 1962 edition of the *Afro American*. He observed that Cooper, a Democrat, would have her hands full with Bernstein, who "is active in Republican circles." Though Cooper has a "traditional following" and the South Ward tends to vote Democratic, Bernstein's "reliance upon one campaign issue – Highway 78 –pointed up his lack of wide experience in civic affairs."²⁶ Bernstein unseated Cooper in the run-off, and had a platform on which he could bring the force of the Council to the defense of Weequahic, or so he thought.

Newark's City Planners finally submitted an alignment plan for I-78 on a course north of Weequahic through blighted sections of the Central Ward. The City Council ignored Weequahic's requests for a study because it held out for a plan more to its liking. This proposal could advance NHA's slum clearance goals, as well as create a more direct artery into the core of Newark's Central Business district. This plan extended the length of the distance between the Parkway and the Turnpike extension and the price tag of construction, but CPB deemed it cost effective because the highway plan could be coupled with urban renewal plans, thus divvying up the cost between two federal

²⁶ Lee Johnson, "Ward Elections Had Exciting Contests," *The Afro American*, June 9, 1962, 5. Johnson called Rev. Kilgore's campaign a "notable experiment," and noted that he "drew most of his votes in the area bounded by Meeker Ave., Bergen Street, Avon Avenue, and Elizabeth Avenue." This area, called Lower Clinton Hill, was a predominantly Black section of the South Ward. Johnson observed that as African Americans continued to move into the South Ward, they became a voting bloc that had to be reckoned with. Johnson must have snickered when he wrote, "(Stanley) Winters lost votes to the Rev. Kilgore in the Clinton Hill section and did not pick up enough in the Weequahic area to compensate." If any person suspected Stanley Winters' ruse as the writer for the *Afro American*, this edition of "Inside Newark" may have thrown that person off the trail. See Robert Curvin, "The Persistent Minority: The Black Political Experience in Newark." (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1975), 44-45.

programs. (See Figure 7.3) In fact, the organization of this plan stemmed from a January 1963 meeting between New Jersey Governor Hughes and, “city and highway department officials.” There is little doubt that Louis Danzig or a representative of Newark Housing Authority had a spoon in this mix, as the highways would further NHA slum clearance goals. Newark News reported this plan as a boon to city, and particularly Weequahic, as it would eliminate less desirable housing in the Central Ward, and preserve good housing as well as the tax base in the South Ward. This was an argument advanced by the WCC. The route would also “prevent the double relocation cost and double loss of buying power of the people being displaced by separate urban renewal and highway projects.”²⁷ The City Planners’ acknowledged that many residents were already burdened by displacement and wanted to avert uncompensated costs on Newark residents, particularly the extra burden of relocation costs on African Americans who were already displaced by slum clearance projects. The politicians’ advocacy for the interests of Weequahic residents should not be overstated. More, the plan was not vetted thoroughly.

Bernstein’s membership on the council did not preclude his press for an independent study, nor did it stop the Council’s forbearance to his motions. The council meeting following the release of the city’s highway proposal was a raucous affair. Bernstein made a motion for the Council to pay for an independent study. His motion went down by an 8-1 vote. North Ward Councilman Joseph Melillo’s response was eloquent. “If we hire another consultant, and we pay him as our agent, he is going to give us the survey we want.”²⁸ Even worse, “if he comes up with another route, it will only

²⁷ Moray Epstein, “Planners to Propose New Path for Rt. 78,” *Newark Sunday News*, March 17, 1963, 24.

²⁸ Bob Shabazian, “Gavel Gives Out,” *Newark News*, April 4, 1963.

confound and confuse the situation and weaken our present position.” In late July, Governor Hughes and Mayor Addonizio rendered Melillo’s point moot. Hughes, Addonizio, and State Highway Commissioner Palmer were scheduled to meet on July 30 to discuss a Palmer’s “final’s conclusion.” Palmer reviewed the City’s Central Ward alignment plan.²⁹ Hughes indicated to Addonizio that Palmer’s plan “will receive favorable reaction from all parties at interest.”

The Addonizio Compromise

On July 30, 1963 Addonizio, Hughes, and Palmer met in a closed-door meeting in Trenton. Addonizio agreed to the State’s plan to build Interstate 78 through the Weequahic section. The plan was not too dissimilar from the original alignment. The new alignment would destroy fewer homes in Weequahic, but it would not spare major business and industrial properties in Irvington.³⁰ Addonizio, calling the compromise “a victory,” explained his decision by engaging in some old fashioned doubletalk. He maintained, “I still object to this alignment,” as it passes through Weequahic, “but I have emphasized the full support that I have received for this position from every elected municipal and county official in Essex County.”³¹ He must not have accounted for Bernstein, who accused the mayor of “playing politics.”³² Bernstein was at the Governor’s office, but was compelled to sit outside. “I have represented the council and

²⁹ Moray Epstein, “To Present New Rt. 78 Alignment,” *Newark News*, July 25, 1963. Newark’s Central Planning Board presented their plan to Palmer on May 2, 1963.

³⁰ Moray Epstein, “New Rt. 78 Line Studied,” *Newark News*, August 4, 1963.

³¹ “Addonizio Raps Bernstein For Statements on Rt. 78,” *Newark News*, August 28, 1963.

³² “Route 78 Plan Hit,” *Newark News*, July 31, 1963.

all of the people in the city and felt that in view of the strong position of the administration and all elected officials in Essex County regarding alignment,” Addonizio explained.³³ “It was not necessary to have personal representation from all elected official at every meeting.” As mayor of Newark, he “had the responsibility of representing this unanimous opposition.” Addonizio browbeat his way into City Hall by accusing Leo Carlin of what he agreed to on July 30, 1963.

Addonizio’s about-face undermined the social and economic stability of Weequahic. Developers that built houses and businesses according to the States original plan now saw their investments in the path of a major highway. National Newark and Essex Bank had built a branch office on Chancellor Avenue and Stetcher Street that was aligned with the center median of the new highway. Murray Aboff described the impact of the highway on the prospects for people of color, estimating that 10,000 people, mostly African American and Puerto Rican, would be “uprooted.”³⁴ More, Weequahic was one of the few neighborhoods in Newark and indeed Essex County that was amenable to Blacks and Latinos. “Weequahic is one of the nations few middle-class residential areas with a solid program of planned integration.”³⁵ The highway would reduce the amount of available housing in Weequahic, and it upset integration within Weequahic as many residents within and near the proposed path fled under an air of uncertainty. Addonizio’s haste subjected Weequahic residents to the uncompensated

³³ “Addonizio Raps Bernstein,” August 28, 1963.

³⁴ Route 78 Plan Hit,” July 31, 1963.

³⁵ Ibid.

costs of highway planning.³⁶ Why did Addonizio renege on his promise and attend to amputating a Newark community?

Evidence suggests that residents of Weequahic were subjected to displacement because of greed and corruption. Newark scholars have pointed out Addonizio's underworld ties. In 1971 Hugh Addonizio was indicted and found guilty of conspiracy "to extort kickbacks from contractors, supplies and engineers engaged in public work projects with the city of Newark."³⁷ Mal Bros. Contracting Company was one of the contractors named in the extortion scheme. In the spring of 1965 Mal Bros. was contracted to complete work that advanced the construction of I-78 in Newark.³⁸ The total cost of the project was \$6 million. Additionally, the New York Port Authority awarded Mal Bros. a \$7 million plus contract for work at Newark Airport.³⁹ It is plausible that Addonizio sold out Weequahic in order to capitalize on Federal and State expenditures on Interstate 78, which were estimated at more than \$306 million.

³⁶ Anthony Downs, "Uncompensated Nonconstruction Costs Which Urban Highways and Urban Renewal Impose Upon Residential Households," *The Analysis of Public Output*, ed. Julius Margolis (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1970), 69-114.

³⁷ *United States v. Addonizio* 451 F.2d 49 (3d Cir. 1971).

³⁸ Moray Epstein, "The Case of the Vanishing Lake," *Newark News*, May 23, 1965. Mal Bros, a construction company, was contracted to fill the dredged-up lake bed and form a sturdy bottom for a system of bridges that will the yet to be built I-78 highway to Newark Airport, Port Newark, Routes 1 & 9, and the Newark Bay Extension. The project required 1.8 million cubic yards of sand. In 1970 Louis and George Malanga, were indicted by a Federal grand jury for filing false tax returns from 1965 to 1968. ("Malanga Brother Indicted" *NYT* September 16, 1970) In *Mal-Bros. Contracting Co. V. Kohl* 113 N.J. Super. 144 (1971), Judge Sullivan's opinion read: "Basically, Mal's disqualification grew out of its involvement with Kantor Supply Company (Kantor Supply), which featured prominently in the criminal trial of former Newark Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio et al. At that trial Kantor Supply was shown, through the testimony of Irving Kantor, the key government witness, to have been a dummy corporation which existed only for the purpose of siphoning moneys out of construction contracts as "kickbacks" to public officials. Mal was named in the testimony as having delivered checks to Kantor Supply against fictitious invoices."

³⁹ "New Work to Begin at Newark Airport," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1968.

Weequahic advocates did not waste time in countering Addonizio's concession to the State. Before the new plan could move forward, the Federal Bureau of Public Roads had to convene a hearing, and new proposals would be heard. On a humid August 21st night in 1963, the City Council engaged in a heated debate over the State's highway proposal.⁴⁰ Some queried about the process of hiring a consultant, and some wondered why the Council waited so long in the first place. It "should have been done years ago...."⁴¹ Others wondered if the Council would include Addonizio in their discussions. East Ward Councilman Phil Gordon felt Addonizio and his administration should be included in the Council's discussion. Bernstein snapped, "Where does togetherness start," in reference to his snubbing in Trenton. Weequahic Community Council president Murray Aboff and the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council president Louis Patterson voiced their support for an independent study and a resolution opposing the alignment. The highway "would destroy the integration in the South Ward which the suburbs refuse to accept," said Aboff.⁴² The council passed a motion to declare its opposition to the State's alignment and appropriate \$10,000 for an independent study. The motion passed with six yeas, two nays, and one abstention. East Ward Councilmen Phil Gordon, who voted against the motion, wondered if a sound report could be submitted in a short time.

Gordon's question was perceptive, but the turnaround time on a comprehensive study was contingent on cooperation from the New Jersey State Highway Commission and the Addonizio administration. The State and the Addonizio's administration were not

⁴⁰ "City Votes \$10,000 for Route 78 Study," *Newark News*, August 22, 1963; "City Council Busy," *Newark News*, August 24, 1963.

⁴¹ "City Council Busy," August 24, 1963.

⁴² "City Votes \$10,000," August 22, 1963.

particularly obliging. On December 27, 1963, the City Council contracted John Clarkeson to conduct an independent study of all alignments.⁴³ Clarkeson expressed reservations about his ability to complete a report because of “the lack of unity at certain governmental levels.”⁴⁴ His trepidations were not baseless. In attempting to execute his duties he “found a definite lack of cooperation,” in his eight months of “efforts to obtain basic information and data required for the study.” He tendered a letter requesting cancellation of his contract in August 1964.

Undeterred, the City Council sought another consultant. In December 1964 they contracted Warren Stadden. The choice of Stadden was ingenious because not only was Stadden a licensed professional engineer with credentials in four states, but he was also the mayor of Roselle, New Jersey, a town in Union County, New Jersey. Stadden utilized his standing amongst his fellow mayors in Union County to assure them that alternate plans for I-78 would not detrimental to their cities. Rather than fomenting distrust, he sought to build municipal mutuality. More, Stadden surmounted Palmer’s stonewalling and procured the information he needed for his reports. In January 1965, Stadden, Bernstein, and another consultant traveled to Washington to meet with Rex Whitton, Federal Highway Administrator. Stadden, based on his preliminary analysis of each route, found that over \$150 million would be saved using an alternate plan.⁴⁵ (See Figure 7.2) He also notified Whitton that the New Jersey State Highway Department was uncooperative in providing information he needed to complete his report.

⁴³ “Rt. 78 Delay Asked: City Awaiting Separate Report,” *Newark News*, January 24, 1964.

⁴⁴ John Clarkeson to Harry Reichenstein, August 14, 1964, Route I-78: Stadden Report, City of Newark Archives, Newark, NJ.

⁴⁵ Press Release, Washington, DC, January 11, 1965, Stadden Report.

After securing the maps and photographs needed for the report, Stadden came to the following conclusion in his report:

Based on available information, it is my professional opinion that there is a potential saving in excess of 150 million dollars in Right-of-way and construction costs by utilizing the alternate alignment for I-78 and the Elizabeth River route as shown on Exhibit “D”. It is also evident that these alignments would result in a considerable reduction in losses of municipal ratable, considerable reductions in the numbers of person to be relocated, and large increases in user-benefits, particularly when combined with a comprehensive revitalization program for improving existing roads.⁴⁶

The Congress of Racial Equality announced their opposition to the State’s proposal.⁴⁷

Even other municipalities like Morristown and Roselle that were under threat from State highway plans expressed their support for the preservation of Weequahic community, viewing the Elizabeth River route as the “logical” choice.⁴⁸ New Jersey Legislators from both the Democrat and Republican parties came out in support of the alignment along the Elizabeth River.⁴⁹

The New Jersey State Highway Department (NJHD) was undeterred in its efforts to build I-78 according to their original plan. The first part of the operation was securing Federal approval of an alignment. The second part required foot soldiers to acquire the properties in the path of the highway. On July 11, 1964 NJHD graduated 111 persons from its School of Advanced Studies who became appraisers in the Right of Way

⁴⁶ Warren Stadden, “Progress Report #1: Investigations of Route I-78, Alternate Alignments, and Elizabeth River Route, As Per Contract of Oct. 7, 1964,” March 1, 1965. Stadden Report. See Appendix 7.2.

⁴⁷ “CORE Opposes Route 78 Line,” *Newark News*, April 4, 1965.

⁴⁸ Tessa Van Horne, Letter to the Editor, *Newark News*, February 26, 1965.

⁴⁹ “River Path Urged As Rt. 78 Alignment,” *Newark News*, April 1965; Moray Epstein, “Legislative Move Due in Rt. 78 Fight,” *Newark News*, March 8, 1965.

Division.⁵⁰ Appraisers had the responsibility of acquiring, “approximately 4,700 individual parcels of property, worth an estimated \$41,500,000, which are needed for construction projects already authorized,” including I-78. The commencement ceremonies took place at Fairleigh-Dickinson University’s Rutherford campus. State Highway Commission Dwight R.G. Palmer delivered the commencement address. Of the first 111 graduates, 77 were suburban residents. 28 newly confirmed appraisers lived in Trenton. In January 1965, thirty-five more prospective right-of-way negotiators began the ten-week course. State Highway Commissioner Palmer noted that the purpose of the school “is to obtain maximum accuracy in appraising in the shortest practicable operating time,” because the tracts of land needed for highway construction will “more than double within the next few years.”⁵¹ NJHD predicted that their workload would be second to that of California. In early February 1965, the Highway Department, upon the recommendation of Governor Hughes, announced a recruitment drive for 56 more appraisers.⁵² NJHD was especially interested in college graduates who completed “American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers Course I or its equivalent,” and had experience in the real estate field. Once they were trained, Right-of-Way Appraisers were sent into the field.

⁵⁰ New Jersey State Highway Department Announcement-School of Advanced Studies *Right-of-Way* Division Graduation, July 9, 1964, box3, Ernest Erber Papers, Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ. The New Jersey State Highway Department created a professional training program to advance its acquisition goals. “The advanced school of right-of-way acquisition was organized because there is no university in the country that graduates professional right-of-way people who qualify to fulfill the multiple role of appraiser, negotiator, lawyer, salesman, and public relations expert.” The curriculum was “recommended by the American Association of State Highway Officials and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads. Instructors were drawn from universities, industry, and the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers.”

⁵¹ New Jersey State Highway Department Announcement-Right of Way School, January 28, 1965, Ernest Erber Papers.

⁵² New Jersey State Highway Department Announcement -Appraiser Recruiting *Right-of-Way* Division, February 4, 1965, Ernest Erber Papers.

“This Interruption is Killing the Poor Man.”

Right-of-Way appraisers, like blockbusters, were heralds of neighborhood transition. It was in the property owner’s best interest to sell early to a Right-of-Way appraiser. A property owner in neighborhood, “under the cloud of impending demolition,” will not likely find a party “willing to pay what was formerly the full fair market value for such property.”⁵³ The threat of condemnation and razing made buyers and renters less inclined to seek properties in the demolition area, thus robbing the home seller and the landlord of income. The State received approval to build I-78 in 1961. Protracted wrangling between pro and anti-highway factions in was bad for home and business owners, especially as the construction of the interstate through Weequahic became a forgone conclusion. The fight to preserve the integrity of Weequahic smacks of a war of attrition, and those aware of such costs chose to abscond before the prices of their property bottomed-out. The Fabyan Corporation owned a tract of land on the corner of Chancellor Avenue and Fabyan Court, and in September 1965 requested a condemnation hearing from the State.⁵⁴ The parcel was valued at \$225,000, and the Corporation wanted the proceedings “culminated,” in order to recoup fair value for the property. In most cases, Weequahic residents whose properties were in the path of I-78 were forced to leave.

On July 7, 1966, the New Jersey State Highway Department issued a press release stating that the Highway Department mailed 170 notices to Weequahic property owners

⁵³ Downs, 80.

⁵⁴ “Mayor, Bernstein Hit Condemnation,” *Newark News*, September 25, 1965. Addonizio and Councilman Bernstein sent telegrams to Governor Hughes demanding that condemnation proceedings of a tract of land in Weequahic cease as the alignment had yet to be settled.

whose homes and businesses were in the path of Interstate 78.⁵⁵ The area encompassed properties between Watson Avenue and Hawthorne Avenue, and Elizabeth Avenue and Bergen Street. There were 465 families and 50 businesses in this area. Van White and his wife, Mae, were going to lose their home and their dry cleaning business. The Whites moved into their walk up apartment at 50 Watson Avenue in 1949, and had worked at his business for just as long. “This interruption is killing the poor man,” said Mr. White. 78 displaced not only people, but also it wiped out local commerce. That section of Upper Weequahic was stable until discussions about I-78 ratcheted up. “I’d say it started about three years ago, when talk of the highway was strong,” said Ethel Sacharow, whose son owned Norman’s Drugs located at 46 Watson Avenue.⁵⁶ “A lot of people moved out, rented their homes... what happened to the neighborhood is a disgrace,” she told a *Newark News* reporter in January 1967. Seven months had elapsed since the Highway Department sent out notices, and the Sachrarows’s property had not been appraised. The reporter surveyed the streets and observed some well-kept houses, but there were an increasing number of obsolescent buildings with “Outdated and faded election posters... plastered on wall exteriors, the only relief from them being peeled and blistering paint.” There were also, “Wooden stairs,” that were “rickety, defying approach.” Under such conditions appraisals would most certainly be lower than their market rate before residents left the neighborhood. The specter of I-78 destabilized Weequahic, as residents in the path and near the proposed sites of construction were forced to deal with the abandonment of properties, increased taxes due to the loss of ratable property, and

⁵⁵ New Jersey State Highway Department Announcement-Interstate Route 78 Newark, Essex County *Right-of-Way* Acquisition, July 7, 1966, Ernest Erbers Papers.

⁵⁶ Jean Joyce, “For Many in Weequahic, Rt. 78 Means an Agonizing Trip,” *Newark Evening News*, February 1, 1967.

displacement from seized properties. More, the Federal Highway Act, unlike urban renewal policies, did not require relocation services for low-income renters. The loss of a large swath of properties reduced housing options for low-income renters in a city lacking options for the low-income market. Weequahic would be an option.

Samuel Convissor was tasked with discussing “Negro-Jewish Relationships in the Central City” at a March 24, 1966 CRC meeting in South Orange, New Jersey.⁵⁷

Convissor claimed that Newark’s Central and South Wards shared unfortunate norms: the uneasy relationship between Jewish merchants and landlords, and their Black patrons.

His discussion sounded a tones that foreshadowed the James Baldwin’s 1967 essay

“Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White”⁵⁸. Convissor noted:

The civil rights activities of the Jewish community do not touch the poor who know only that they are being overcharged for merchandise; that they get poorer service than white tenants both from their landlords and the city; that they must buy everything on an installment basis at incredibly high interest rates; that if they miss one payment for whatever reason, the merchandise is repossessed immediately and that they are treated not as customers but as thieves.

He concluded his report, warning that the 1966 could be a violent one and that the CRC

“first seek to end violations.”⁵⁹ Convissor’s prognostication was a year and four months

⁵⁷ Minutes, March 24, 1966. box 1902, Weequahic Area Committee: Sub-committee on Urban-Suburban Relations II, 1964, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, Whippany, NJ.

⁵⁸ James Baldwin recalled his childhood in Harlem and the Black communities relationship with Jewish landlords, grocers, butcher, and other merchants. Baldwin described the collective sentiment of Black Harlem: “Not all of these white people were cruel--on the contrary, I remember some who were certainly as thoughtful as the bleak circumstances allowed--but all of them were exploiting us, and that was why we hated them.” Baldwin goes on to decry, not Judaism, but Christianity, and Jewish assimilation to White, and Christian morality. See “Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White,” *The New York Times Magazine*, April 9, 1967.

⁵⁹ Minutes, March 24, 1966, Weequahic Area Committee: Sub-committee on Urban-Suburban Relations II.

off, and the spark for the uprising was one of many instances of police brutality. However, the financial straits caused by rent gouging and commercial duplicity undoubtedly fostered Black resentment of Jewish landlords and merchants. Convissor made plain the culpability of Jewish merchants and landlords in the continued oppression African Americans. The profit driven exploitation of African Americans by shopkeepers and lessors, many of whom were Jewish, took advantage of the poorer and more vulnerable Black Newarkers, thus exacerbating class disparities, reinscribing racial differences, and creating greater and more severe social isolation. Rabbi Jonathan Prinz, son of Rabbi Joachim Prinz, observed the middle class orientation of Jewish interracial work. “Jewish civil rights work,” according to Prinz, “does not penetrate to the man in the Negro ghetto.”⁶⁰ The lack of anti-poverty in Central Newark was most glaring, but poverty was increasingly becoming a problem in the South Ward due to displacement from urban renewal and slum clearance. Convissor and Rabbi Prinz advocated for an end to Jewish practices that reinforced deprivation. Rabbi Jonathan Prinz, who was vice president of the United Community Corporation, was invested in not only ending exploitation but also in empowering the poor to overcome their exigent circumstances.

Area Board Nine and Growing Poverty in Weequahic

Urban renewal failed to eliminate the social impact of blight: poverty. Some historians argued that it was never intended to eliminate poverty, but simply to confine it in order to benefit the interests of businessmen. While the Newark Housing Authority

⁶⁰ Ibid. At an October 27, 1966 CRC meeting, it was pointed out that “only a few Jews are slumlords but these few are in the business on a large scale.” The CRC passed a motion to address Jewish slumlords and merchants. The more broad problems of education, law enforcement, and municipal services like code enforcement and sanitation would be address in conjunction with other groups.

considered urban renewal successful, as it led to massive clearance of communities and the construction of new buildings in the downtown, the problems of poverty were becoming more entrenched in areas that were previously not blighted. Indeed, communities like Weequahic were under threat of blight. In 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson's called for legislation to eliminate poverty in the United States.⁶¹ Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, which led to the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which administered applications for federal monies that funded local initiatives to eliminate poverty through multipronged programs. United Community Corporation (UCC) was the Newark battalion engaged in the War on Poverty. What became evident early on were the Municipal Councils efforts to undermine UCC plans. City officials saw OEO, like FHA, as a source of federal funds to advance their own agendas. UCC sought to empower Newark's poor to ensure their "maximum feasible participation" in their own recovery. In Newark, maximum participation was promoted through the nine Area Boards. Each Area Board, which was composed of residents from particular neighborhoods around the city, was "independent and semi-autonomous and free to develop programs to meet the needs of the locale and the residents of the area."⁶² Per the rules of UCC, each Area Board would establish its own by-laws, as the concerns

⁶¹ For a reading on the War on Poverty and OEO see Michael L. Gillette's *Launching the War on Poverty: an Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Mark Edward Baum's *Social Change and the Empowerment of the Poor: Poverty Representation in Milwaukee's Community Action Programs, 1964-1972* (Lanham, M.D; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001). For readings on Community Action Programs in Newark see Mark Krasovic's *The Struggle for Newark: Plotting Urban Crisis in the Great Society* diss. (Yale University, 2008); Julia Rabig's *Broken Deal: Devolution, Development, and Civil Society in Newark, New Jersey, 1960—1990* diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 2007); and Cyril D. Tyson's *2 Years Before The Riot!: Newark, New Jersey And The United Community Corporation Inc., 1964-1966 : The Full, Real Story Of The Anti-Poverty Program* (New York: Jay Street Publishers. 2000).

⁶² Memorandum regarding Newark's Anti-Poverty Program, August 4, 1966, Weequahic Area Committee: Sub-committee on Urban-Suburban Relations II.

of community varied because the constituencies were different. The by-laws would reflect the needs of the particular area. This approach community development reflected the idea of “participatory democracy” as championed by Civil Rights paragon, Ella Baker.⁶³ Rabbi Jonathan Prinz believed that these community action programs were the next logical step in the Civil Rights movement, as “Its philosophy is... a translation of the civil-rights ideology... applied to an economic rather than to a racial or religious minority.”⁶⁴ The program was radical in that it empowered those who were at the mercy of municipal agencies like the Newark Housing Authority to have both agency and capital to affect change.

The UCC recognized that Newark was a socially and economically diverse city. Particular areas required interventions more readily than others. Yet, they were perceptive and understood that displacement from urban renewal, and economic restructuring was dispersing conditions of poverty beyond the borders of the Central Ward ghetto. UCC planned to establish Area Boards in outer lying communities of the South and West Wards after the most urgent communities established Boards. Municipal leadership from these outlying communities did not see a need for Community Action Programs in their districts. South Ward Councilman Lee Bernstein, along with West Ward Councilman and Mayor Hugh Addonizio’s cousin Frank, did not believe there was poverty in their respective middle-class communities of Weequahic and Ivy Hill. The repudiation of Area Boards in their communities was a ploy to undermine UCC efforts,

⁶³ See Carol Mueller, “The Origins of “Participatory Democracy”” *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965*. ed. By Vicki L. Crawford, et. al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 51-68. Also see Barbara Ransby’s *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, NC: London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁶⁴ Cyril D. Tyson, *2 Years Before The Riot!: Newark, New Jersey And The United Community Corporation Inc., 1964-1966 : The Full, Real Story Of The Anti-Poverty Program* (New York: Jay Street Publishers. 2000), 443.

and, more importantly, assume control of federal anti-poverty program monies. In August 1965, the Newark City Council appointed an investigation committee to examine UCC and Newark's anti-poverty programs.⁶⁵ Frank Addonizio was the chair, Bernstein the vice-chair, and Central Ward Councilman Irvine Turner an associate member. The Council Committee to Study the Antipoverty Program for the City of Newark, New Jersey released its report in December 1965.

To claim that there was a conflict of interests on the committee is an understatement. In the report, the investigating committee extended plaudits to federal government for establishing "a bold social experiment to alleviate poverty."⁶⁶ Very quickly the report turned to maligning the UCC, but more revealing it cast a picture of poverty that reflected proto-neoliberal diatribes about individual character and deficient culture. What is especially peculiar is Bernstein and Addonizio did not reference Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, whose "findings" substantiated both liberal and conservative views on poverty. The investigating committee denoted Michael Todd, the movie producer, referencing Todd's line "Being broke was a state of fact – being poor, a state of mind."⁶⁷ The Committee called poverty, "an abstraction... an idea which must be overcome with a more powerful idea."⁶⁸ That idea is the "self-above and beyond poverty." In their estimation, one can achieve that idea

⁶⁵ Tyson, 323-335.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 323

⁶⁷ Ibid. Michael Todd produced the film "Around the World in 80 Days". According to one newspaper account, Todd belongs in the "came-up-the-hard-way class," as he was raised in a poor Jewish household in Chicago, becoming very successful through the dint of his own efforts; losing a million dollars, and then recouping his fortune. See "'Around the World' Mike Todd Goes From Poverty To Riches In 10 Years," *The Desert News and Telegram*, July 23, 1957, 9.
www.news.google.com/newspapers?nid=336&dat=19570723&id=IJUuAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=OEgDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=6999,4331498 (accessed on November 1, 2013)

⁶⁸ Tyson, 323.

of self, “by the restructuring of the self image through education, training, and accomplishment.” The committee tipped its hand by grounding their report with such disingenuous and deceitful reasoning.

They had no intent of addressing the structural causes of poverty, like the condition of Newark’s schools, exploitative realty practices, the loss of low-skilled jobs, or even the effects of highway construction plans on Weequahic homeowners. More, they willfully and dishonestly denied the existence of penury amongst their constituents. Bernstein was of the opinion that an Area Board in Weequahic was unnecessary because poverty did not exist. Stating that UCC resources would be better served in the Central Ward, Bernstein stated “This Weequahic area south of Renner Avenue compares favorably with the finest residential communities in the Metropolitan Area-to declare this a ‘poverty’ area by means of establishing an Area Board is an insult to the intelligence of the citizens of Weequahic.”⁶⁹ This reasoning corroborates the fact that there was class stratification between Upper and Lower Weequahic. Additionally, Bernstein appears oblivious to the demographic shifts in Weequahic, as families displaced by slum clearance were settling in various sections of Weequahic. Furthermore, Addonizio and Bernstein played upon on the class-consciousness of their middle class constituency by claiming that establishing an Area Board would “stigmatize” Weequahic and Ivy Hill as poverty areas, and they used the lexicon of blockbusting, which were couched in racial tropes of invading Blacks, to rouse fears against the Area Boards.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., 339.

⁷⁰ At the Area Board #8 organizational meeting Addonizio told residents that FHA would not subsidize mortgages for properties in communities where Area Boards are established (Tyson, 369).

Their tactics were effective enough to goad some Weequahic residents to direct action against the UCC. The December 15, 1965 Area Board #9 organizational meeting was initially scheduled to meet at the Berkeley Savings and Loan Association. The meeting was moved to Maple Avenue School after Berkeley administrators withdrew their offices because of complaints from residents and accountholders threats to close their accounts. The responses of segments of the community to the establishment of an Area Board in Weequahic reveals the deep-set resentment towards those in need and underscores Rabbi Wolfe's contention about bourgeois Jews. More, it shows that ethnoracial identities do not fully explicate a person or group's politics. Bernstein was Jewish and abided conservative views that eschewed the Office of Economic Opportunity's intervention into Weequahic. Indeed, his stance More it questions the idea that Jews, in comparison to Catholics, did not pugnaciously contest the parameters of their residences in cities.

The December 15th meeting was rife with contention as Weequahic residents stated their cases for and against the Area Board. UCC Community Action Director James Blair answered questions about property values, assuring meeting attendees that their properties would not be devalued. He pulled their coattail to the relationship of Weequahic to the rest of the city, stating "You can't sit back and say Weequahic is an ivory tower... if part of the city is crumbling." "You're the ones who complain about high taxes," Blair pointed out, "but all you do is talk about it."⁷¹ Murray Aboff raised the point of population movements in Newark. Aboff, a member of the Jewish Community Council and former president of the Weequahic Community Council, stated "We're going to need some of the help the Central Ward schools should have gotten 25 years

⁷¹ Ibid., 379.

ago.” After hours of quarrelsome debating, the attendees voted to organize an Area Board by a vote of 56 to 35.⁷² Area Board #9 was contentiously born.

A second meeting convened in order to create a by-law committee and lay out the direction of the Area Board #9. That meeting was just as contentious, as Bernstein and, interestingly enough, Councilman Frank Addonizio attended the meeting with a cadre of agitators. They attempted to disrupt the proceedings, shouting, “We don’t need a poverty board,” and “We want to vote to disorganize.” The temporary chair of the Board, an African American minister, proceeded despite the shouts, taking nominations for Area Board #9 by-law committee.⁷³ Amidst the unruliness Phil Winters, who lived at 41 Lyons Avenue near the Park, charged the platform shouting that the board was organized with “shills” at an unannounced meeting. Murray Aboff stood up and pleaded, “I don’t want to see this meeting interrupted by rowdies.” Winters made a beeline for Aboff, yelling “Who are you calling rowdy,” before several men interceded. After some contention, Lee Bernstein was given an opportunity speak, restating his point that the Central Ward would be better served with another Area Board. “Do you want the stigma of being ‘povertized,’” he asked. Councilman Addonizio, who was out of his jurisdiction, was also given time to speak. Dubbing the organization of Area Board #9 an “injustice,” he rhetorically asked, “Would you move into a poverty area?”⁷⁴ Donald Payne, who had worked with Bernstein to avert the construction of Interstate 78 through Weequahic admonished the audience at the December 15, stating, “We all bear the responsibility for

⁷² Ibid., 378.

⁷³ Reverend Cartwright was pastor of Union Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a congregation that was located on Sussex Avenue in the Central Ward. In the summer of 1969, Union A.M.E. moved into the former Wainwright Street synagogue, located at 209 Wainwright Street, near the corner of Lyons Avenue. Union A.M.E. still worships there.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 451.

the disgraceful behavior here tonight.”⁷⁵ Above the din of gripes, he reminded the audience of the need for an Area Board: “I can show you poverty less than a block away and we have a chance to put the best program in the country to work.”⁷⁶

In contradistinction to Bernstein’s position, there were many Jews that viewed UCC and the Area Boards as an effective means of redressing problems that Newark politicians failed to remedy. Indeed, support for the UCC caused a schism in Newark’s Jewish community. At the December 15 Area Board #9 meeting, Gerald Greenberg, who succeeded Murray Aboff as WCC president, was nominated to become chair of the Area Board. He declined, stating, “I see no sense in splitting off the community.”⁷⁷ Greenberg’s refusal to chair the Area Board reflected the Jewish Community Council’s reticence to come out in support of the UCC.⁷⁸ JCC support might have undermined Lee Bernstein’s political traction amongst South Ward Jews by dividing the Jewish vote in the 1966 Municipal Council election. Rabbi Prinz, believed that, by and large, Jews were adhering to the status quo. “Altogether Jews have tended to [become] much more conservative about civil rights,” he remarked, “especially in Jewish Community Councils.”⁷⁹ Jews remained supportive of Civil Rights, but many “shied away from the more militant actions,” and were “wary about civil disobedience.” Community Action

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 380.

⁷⁸ In February 1966, the UCC general membership convened to vote on expanding Newark political representation on the UCC Board. Mayor Hugh Addonizio was already on the Board, as was Irvine Turner. The vote was to expand city representation from five to 26 members. The measure was defeated. The JCC considered endorsing UCC. However, after UCC membership refused greater influence from Newark’s politicians, JCC felt “that an endorsement of the United Community Corporation at this time would be tantamount to approval of the action of the [UCC] general membership” (CRC Minutes, March 24, 1966). The JCC “decided to table the resolution until a more appropriate time.”

⁷⁹ Tyson, 444.

Programs helped fill that gaps that the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were not able to correct, namely providing employment opportunities and educational improvement. “Poverty money,” said Prinz, was “being used to translate old slogans into realities,” and this was achieved by shifting “some responsibility in community planning from the advantaged,” in NHA and City Hall, “to the disadvantaged.”⁸⁰

The dissent over Area Board #9 may well have been a fomented by Bernstein and Addonizio to dramatize the actual level of opposition to Community Action Programs in Weequahic. Poverty, as deployed by Bernstein and Addonizio, was a shibboleth for African American. Councilman Addonizio was himself waging a campaign to avert the creation of an Area Board in the West Ward community of Vailsburg, a locale historian Mark Krasovic described as Newark’s “whitest neighborhood.”⁸¹ In comparison, the South Ward was predominantly Black. By the spring of 1966, Donald Payne was one of Bernstein’s rivals in the upcoming election for the South Ward Councilman seat.

There were political reasons for Bernstein to view Area Board #9 with trepidation. Donald Payne had been a UCC board member. UCC required board members who were running for office to take a leave of absence in order to avoid conflicts of interest. Payne could have used his influence as a former board member to pull more votes his way. More, the departure of Jews from Weequahic to the suburbs signaled the dwindling of ethnic politics in the South Ward. Bernstein won the 1966 the election because the Black vote in the South Ward vote was split between Payne and another

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Krasovic, 156. Vailsburg was the home to many Newark officials, including Mayor Hugh Addonizio.

African American candidate.⁸² However, by 1968, a committee of South Ward residents called for special election in order to unseat Bernstein.⁸³ Throughout his tenure African American residents thought Bernstein “indifferent” towards their concerns.⁸⁴ This was manifest in his vociferous opposition to Area Board #9. Historian Kevin Mumford found that Bernstein had a penchant for going against the interests of his constituency in the South Ward by voting “conservatively with the Italian American bloc,”⁸⁵ that was ensconced in the North and West Wards. During his 1968-1969 campaign in the recall election, Bernstein supported North Ward Councilman Anthony Imperiale’s proposal for the Newark Police Department to use K-9 attack dogs as a means to deter crime.⁸⁶ Bernstein’s support for such an odiousness proposal is at best insensitive, and at worst racist, in light of the 1963 marches in Birmingham, Alabama where Public Safety Commissioner Bull Connor used attack dogs to assail peaceful protesters. Bernstein’s contempt for African American community was underscored by his greed. Political corruption in Newark, like its elections, was non-partisan.

In January 1971, a New Jersey Superior Court judge found Bernstein guilty of

⁸² New Jersey Governor’s Select Commission on Civil Disorder. *Report for Action*. (Trenton: State of New Jersey, 1968), 11.

⁸³ See *Roman v. Sharper* (1969) 53 N.J. 338 www.leagle.com/decision/196939153NJ338_1268.xml/ROMAN%20v.%20SHARPER (accessed on March 12, 2013)

⁸⁴ John Kramer. “The Election of Blacks to City Councils: A 1970 Status Report and a Prolegomenon” *The Journal of Black Studies*. Vol. 1, Issue 4 (June, 1971), 458.

⁸⁵ Mumford, 201.

⁸⁶ Anthony Imperiale was an Italian American who became prominent in the predominantly white North Ward in the wake of the Newark riots. Labeled a vigilante by many Black Newarkers, Imperiale advocated violent defense of White neighborhoods against Black incursion. In 1968, Imperiale ran for and won an At-Large Council seat. According to Kevin Mumford, the FBI “classified Imperiale under multiple categories ‘subversive, ultra rightist, racist, and fascist (186).’” See Mumford’s *Newark*, 170-190. Also, David M. Halbfinger, “Anthony Imperiale, 68, Dies: Polarizing Force in Newark,” *The New York Times*, December 28, 1999.

“gross indifference and wanton unconcern for the interests,” of Newark residents.⁸⁷ The decisions stemmed from Bernstein’s affiliation with the Associated Humane Society (AHS). In 1967 Bernstein became a member of the AHS Board of Trustees and eventually became the first vice-president on the board. He secured “substantial monetary increases in AHS’s contract with the City of Newark for animal control services,”⁸⁸ in a city that over the course of the 1960s saw a significant reduction in municipal maintenance services.⁸⁹ Bernstein secured these contracts with the assistance of Newark Council members, including Frank Addonizio. In September 1968, Bernstein volunteered to become AHS’s first executive director. In that position he continued to negotiate contracts between the AHS and the city of Newark. The impropriety of this action garnered the attention of organized labor in Newark. Labor leaders of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Teamsters, and Asphalt Workers Union, to name a few, became active members of the South Ward Recall Committee (SRC).⁹⁰

The Reverend Horace P. Sharper headed SRC. Sharper grew up in South Carolina. Jazz trumpeter and Bebop progenitor Dizzy Gillespie, who grew up in Cheraw, South Carolina, reminisced about his first girlfriend and recalled the trombone-playing

⁸⁷ “Opinion and decision of Honorable Samuel Allcorn, Jr., J.S.C. (January 29, 1971)” as quoted by the State of New Jersey Commission of Investigation. *Associated Humane Societies*, (New Jersey, 2003), 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ “Negro neighborhoods are dirty because of inadequate street cleaning. A house is gutted by fire and is not torn down. A governmental unit takes over buildings in preparation for urban renewal or highway construction and does not even secure them against trespassers. Cars stand abandoned on the streets for months, but the city does not tow them away, even when complaints are made. They are stripped of usable parts. Sometimes someone sets fire to them, but their hulks still stay at the curb. The abandoned buildings and cars reinforce the feeling of the ghetto dwellers that the City does not care about them. At one point, there was an estimate that the streets contained 1,000 abandoned cars. “ Governor’s Select Commission, *Report for Action*, 17.

⁹⁰ “Labor Leaders Oppose Mrs. Lemon’s Candidacy,” *The Afro American*, December 28, 1968

Horace Sharper, who “went away to Benedict College and then came back home and stole Mary’s heart from me.”⁹¹ After completing his studies, Sharper ministered at Saint John Baptist Church in Columbia and taught at Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina before migrating to Newark, New Jersey, where he became pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church.⁹² Sharper led the movement to file petitions to recall Bernstein. The petitions were filed in 1968 and a recall election date was set for June 1969. Lawyers on behalf of Bernstein filed a motion to nullify the petition in early 1969, however in March 1969, Superior Court judges found that the petitions for recall were valid.⁹³ On March 25, 1969 Bernstein, who was a volunteer executive director, signed a contract with AHS stipulating that Bernstein “would receive employment and be supplied with a regular source of income, in the event that his political tenure (and income) were terminated by the recall election of June 1969.”⁹⁴ The negotiated salary was \$15,000, which was the same annual salary for members of the Newark council. Public sentiment in the South Ward was against Bernstein. He knew he would lose in the election. More than one in five voters called for recall.⁹⁵ Reverend Sharper won the election, becoming the third

⁹¹ Dizzy Gillespie and Al Fraser, *To Be, or Not... To Bop* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 32.

⁹² “Our Heritage. A Brief Account of the Early Saint John Baptist Church,” Saint John’s Baptist Church, www.saintjohnbaptistchurch1908.com/about_us.php (accessed on January 4, 2014); Sula M. Scott “Senior Class History” *Morris College Yearbook, 1958*; Junius W. Williams *Unfinished Agenda: Urban Politics in the Era of Black Power* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2014), 182.

⁹³ “We are aware of *N.J.S.A.* 40:69A-153 which, dealing with petitions for nomination of candidates for the regular municipal election, speaks of a percentage “of the registered voters of the municipality *or the ward, as the case may be.*” Abstractly, a difference in phrasing may be meaningful, but here it would go against the grain of the statute to infer a conscious purpose to select the entire municipality as the base for a recall petition affecting a single ward. The judgment is therefore reversed.” *Roman v. Sharper (1969)*

⁹⁴ Opinion and decision of Honorable Samuel Allcorn, Jr., J.S.C. (January 29, 1971), 7.

⁹⁵ “Newark Recall is a Success,” *The Daily Register*, June 18, 1969, 2. A total of 1,952 South Ward residents voted to retain Bernstein. 6,422 voted for recall.

African American elected official in Newark's history, and the South Ward's first. There was little time for celebration.

Plans for Interstate 78 had taken a toll on the community. Jane Jacobs declared that "there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street."⁹⁶ In such a community the "buildings on a street," Jacobs contends, should be built to "handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers."⁹⁷ By 1969, Weequahic neighborhoods in the path of Interstate 78 were devoid of eyes. State officials claimed the properties of Weequahic residents, but the buildings were not demolished or shuttered.⁹⁸ Children from surrounding neighborhoods played in the vacant buildings, but so too did ill-intentioned persons. The *Newark News* reported that the bodies of a four year-old boy and an 18 year-old girl were found amongst the buildings, and Newark police reported an increase in muggings. Reverend Sharper, along with two other Councilmen, were dispatched to Trenton to convince state authorities "to take measures to help alleviate the growing health and police problem," in Weequahic.⁹⁹ By the time African Americans assumed leadership in Newark, the city was in decline.

Amiri Baraka, in his essay "Newark Before the Black Man Conquered" called Lee Bernstein, "'A councilman for all the people,' just as Hugh Addonizio is 'A Mayor

⁹⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 35.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Meeting Due On Vacant Dwellings," *Newark News*, October 22, 1969.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

For All The People.””¹⁰⁰ In December 1969, Bernstein, with three other Councilmen, were indicted on federal charges along with Mayor Addonizio.¹⁰¹ Bernstein was charged with tax evasion. Despite his demonstrated opposition to I-78, Lee Bernstein’s campaign against Area Board #9 undermined his credibility in an increasingly African American residential district. But more, his actions revealed an unabashed indifference to the needs of his constituency. Newark’s economic and political leadership were complicit in the city’s decline. Using the federal largesse, the Newark Housing Authority altered Newark’s geography in order to safeguard the city’s commercial interests, but even more, individuals like Bernstein and Addonizio sought personal profit, and in the process hastened the decline of the Weequahic section of Newark.

¹⁰⁰ Amiri Baraka, “Newark Before Black Men Conquered,” *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze: Essays since 1965* (New York: Random House, 1971), 60.

¹⁰¹ *United States v. Addonizio* (1970). One of the charges against Addonizio, Bernstein, and other defendants was “ ‘willfully, unlawfully, and feloniously’ conspiring to ‘obstruct, delay, and affect interstate commerce’ by extortion ‘induced both by fear of financial injury and under color of official right’ in connection with certain municipal construction projects undertaken by the City of Newark.”

CONCLUSION

“Mount Zion Which Cannot be Moved.”

Quiet Weequahic, once Jewheaven now is Route 66 of Black desire.
-Amiri Baraka¹

In 1960 there were four Whites for every African American in Weequahic. By 1970 there were five African Americans for every White American.² Weequahic's population swelled to 53,422 persons, with 4,000 more residents than in 1960. The population continued to increase even as after Hugh Addonizio ceded roughly 20 blocks of the Weequahic community to the State of New Jersey for construction of the highway.

Future studies of Weequahic can shed light on the community during the 1970s. The present day Weequahic captured in film *Heart of Stone* did not emerge overnight. As early as 1971, residents reported “a major problem with crime, especially narcotics.”³ There is evidence of a criminal organization rooting itself in the South Ward, and plying various trades including drug trafficking. In 1988 Federal authorities arrested Wayne Pray, who went under the name Akbar. He was considered “head of ‘The Family,’ a 200- to 400-member drug distribution operation called one of the most important and entrenched in the Newark area.”⁴ Pray was reportedly a member of New of World Islam, a group that in the early 1970s was arrested on murder charges, including the murder of two men whose decapitated bodies were discovered by a boy taking a jog through

¹ Baraka, 60.

² 1960 and 1970 United States Census

³ Don Vaillancourt, “Weequahic Elegance,” *Newark News*, March 8, 1971.

⁴ “Alleged Kingpin Nabbed in Fla.,” *Reading Eagle*, June 23, 1988, www.news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1955&dat=19880623&id=YCAyAAAAIBAJ&sjid=e-UFAAAAIBAJ&pg=4355,7433022 (accessed on November 20, 2013)

Weequahic Park.⁵ Such events should be examined as part of larger scheme of organized crime that had footing in Newark City Hall. John O'Shea, whose Italian mother was an Addonizio supporter recalled his Irish father's warnings in 1962 about Hugh Addonizio and the mafia in Newark:

My dad told me "you're going to have a level of crime in this city if Addonizio gets elected – the selling of drugs on the streets,"... He told me the African American community will not grow out, and will be downtrodden. He told me Addonizio was a pimp for the mafia. Everyone knew the mob controlled the port through the Catena family....⁶

Addonizio was sentenced to ten years in prison following the indictment that linked him to the Boiardo crime family.⁷ Discussions on the decline of Weequahic must be considered within the larger context of Newark's unfortunate history of organized crime.

Baraka called Weequahic the Route 66 of Black desire. He invoked Nat King Cole's swinging pop song about motoring on the highway out West ("Travel my way, take the highway that is best").⁸ Route 66 started in Chicago, cuts through "Saint Loueey," and other towns and cities, before, ending in "San Bernardino", California. This was a not so subtle swipe at I-78, which bisects Weequahic on its way to westward suburban and rural destinations. Interstate 78 cut a path through Upper Weequahic, heading west from Elizabeth Avenue and then turning southwest after Osborne Terrace on towards the Garden State Parkway. Bridges were built to span the highway at

⁵ "12 Members of Black Muslin Sect Arrested For Murder," *The Spartanburg Herald*, October 25, 1973, C3.
www.news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1876&dat=19731025&id=p3AsAAAAIBAJ&sjid=4MsEAAAAIBAJ&pg=7478,5045876 (accessed November 2, 2013)

⁶ Max Pizarro "The Irish make a last stand with Carlin against Addonizio in the 1962 Newark mayor's race." *PolitickerNJ.com*, March 17, 2010. www.politickernj.com/max/37757/irish-make-last-stand-carlin-1962-newark-mayors-race (accessed on November 2, 2013)

⁷ Robert Rudolph, *Mafia Wiseguys: The Mob that Took on the Feds* (New York: SP Books, 1994), 44.

⁸ Bobby Troup, "Route 66," 1946.

Chancellor Avenue, Lyons Avenue, Nye Avenue, Osborne Terrace, and Bergen Street, but over eight hundred homes and businesses were removed. Thoroughfares like Chadwick Avenue and Seymour Ave were severed, turning avenues into dead ends and circles. Other streets like Conklin Avenue were wiped off the map. In 1968, the Newark Housing Authority declared that I-78 would “act as a natural boundary separating it from the industrial sections of the north.”⁹ In contrast, Weequahic resident Murray Aboff called I-78 a “depressed wall of China”.¹⁰ Before the bridges spanning the highway were completed, the excavation of the conduit between Elizabeth Avenue and Chancellor Avenue effectively cut the Northern end of Weequahic off from the South, making travel between the two areas more than inconvenient. Nye and Watson Avenues became the new Northern border of Weequahic. The deleterious impact of I-78 on Weequahic cannot be overstated, as proprietors along the Hawthorne Avenue commercial corridor closed their shops for lack of patronage from Weequahic’s departed residents.

Weequahic became a destination for Black middle class Newarkers, as African American professionals began to settle in homes south of Lyons Avenue.¹¹ African Americans, like the Jews before, fashioned a community in their image. In 1972, Gladys Grauer opened Aard Studio, an art gallery that featured the work of African American artists.¹² It was the first forum in Newark for Black artists and was key to launching the careers many artists of color. A Weequahic resident recalled when many of the Jewish owned business along Bergen Street closed, African American proprietors bought the

⁹ City of Newark, *Community Renewal Program* (Newark: Newark Housing Authority, 1968).

¹⁰ Murray Aboff to Stanley Winters, Route I-78: Stadden Report, City of Newark Archives.

¹¹ Vaillancourt, “Weequahic Elegance.”

¹² Gladys Grauer, interview.

storefronts and opened up their stores, including a pet shop, record shop, and hardware store. Black church congregations purchased the old Jewish synagogues, and as African Methodist Episcopalians or Baptists, they celebrated the birth, death, and resurrection of the King of Jews. Prominent Newark political figures, including Donald Payne and then councilman Sharpe James, lived in Weequahic. As early as the mid-1960s, the Pittsburgh Courier, a nationally distributed Black newspaper, regularly reported on “the happenings” in Weequahic, attesting to the high status conferred by having Weequahic address. But as Payne noted, there also was increasing poverty in Weequahic. Sociologist Mary Patillo-McCoy contends that the African American middle class lives “near and with the black poor.”¹³ Author Benilde Little recalled that families from Newark’s Central Ward from moved into Weequahic during the 1970s. In early 1967, Hugh Addonizio brokered a deal to bring the University of Medicine and Dentistry to Newark without consulting Newark residents.¹⁴ Sixty acres in the Central Ward were condemned and razed for the construction of the medical center, displacing thousands more blacks from their homes. Little, who attended Weequahic High in the early 1970s, dramatized her encounters with African American children who once lived in the Central Ward: “Suddenly my preppy clothes, the furniture in our house, my piano lessons, became a topic, something that separated me from the new, less fortunate kids who were moving into my neighborhood from the Central Ward.”¹⁵ Economic changes were afoot in Weequahic. They resulted

¹³ Mary Patillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 13.

¹⁴ Governor’s Select Commission, *Report for Action*, 61-62.

¹⁵ Benilde Little, interview; *Ibid.*, *Good Hair*, 26-27.

from to the convergence of public policies that privileged the fortunes of Whites and diminished those of African Americans.

Jewish presence in Weequahic has not altogether disappeared. Larry Reisner runs Bragman's Delicatessen, a fixture at 393 Hawthorne Avenue since his father opened the shop way back in 1951. Weequahic High School remains a centripetal force for Black and Jewish alumni. The recent successes of the football team have brought "the Orange and Brown" together to tailgate and celebrate victory on the gridiron. The Weequahic High School Alumni Association remains committed to helping recent graduates attain the rewards of higher education through fundraising and scholarships. Created in 1997, the Alumni Association has raised over \$350,000 for Weequahic High School students. With skyrocketing tuition costs and student loans, rather than grants, becoming a substantial part of financial aid packages, the Weequahic High School Alumni Association's efforts are timely and transformative.

Weequahic Park remains a draw for Newark residents. Hundreds of men and women go to park daily to jog around Weequahic Lake, play soccer, cricket, or a few rounds of golf. During the summer months thousands of attendees cut a rug at music festivals. Homes in Weequahic are still some of most stately residences in Essex County, and there is resurgence of business along the Bergen Street corridor. The incidents of crime cannot be ignored, but neither should the efforts of residents to preserve their community. Sandra West, whose father Willie West started the Chadwick Avenue Block Association back in the 1959, has taken on her his duties as block president.¹⁶ Her efforts included bringing suit against a person illegally dumping trash in her neighborhood. Says

¹⁶ Barry Carter, "Newark Woman Keeps Block Association Alive with Fight to Clean Up Corner," *Star Ledger*, May 9, 2010

West, “I’m going to be here and fight the good fight.” The story of Weequahic is more than a narrative of prolific growth or tragic decline. It remains a testament to the struggle of people who remain steadfastly resolute to preserving their neighborhood.

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Illustrations

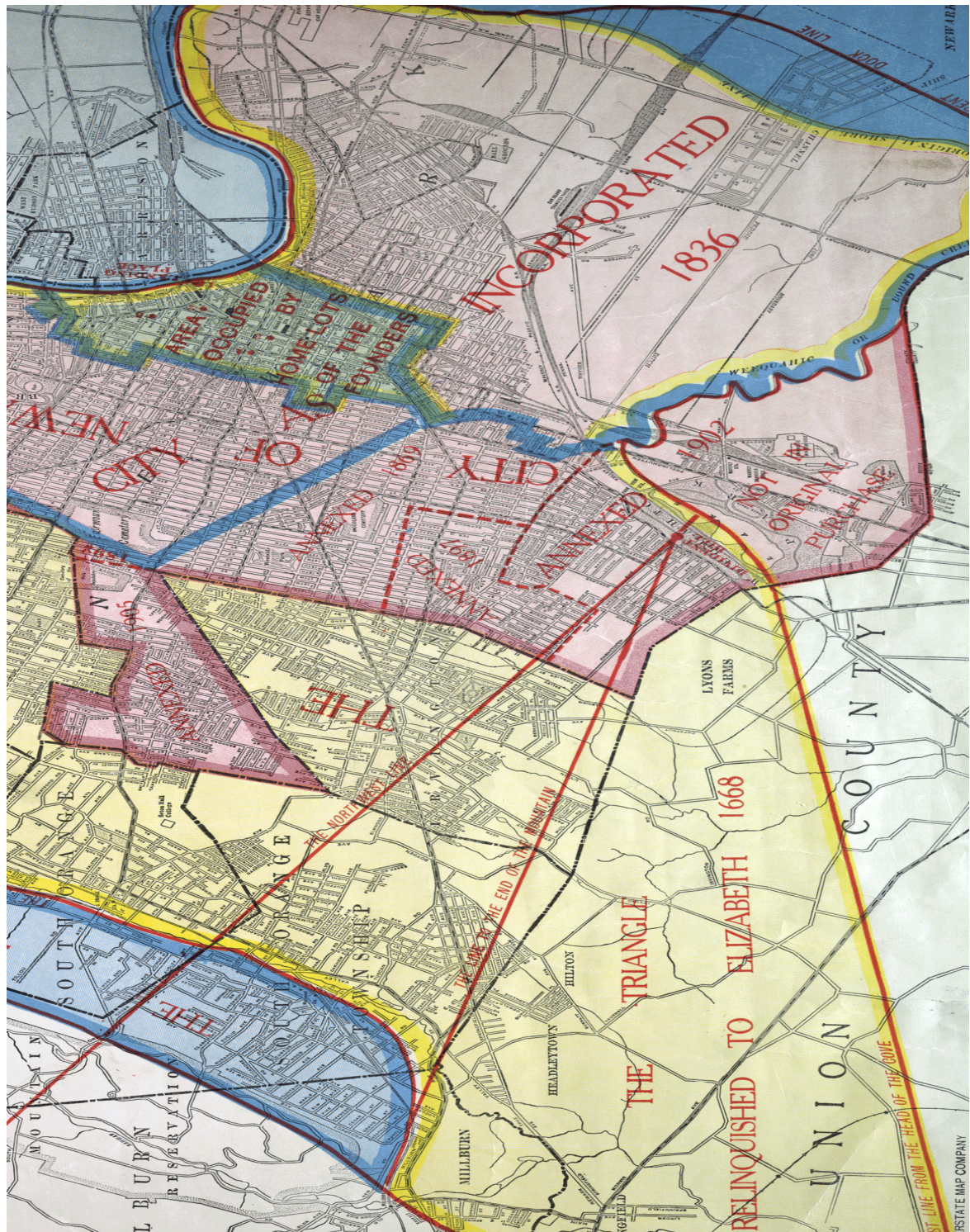


Figure 1. Map of Newark from 1666 to 1913. Compiled for the 250th celebration by Edward S. Rankin, C.E., August 1916, revised January 1918. (Cropped to focus on Weequahic)

WEEQUAHIC PARK TRACT.
NEWARK, N. J.
FRANK J. BOCK, 300 BROAD ST.

Beautifully located. Quickly reached. Railroad connection with New York city; station within two minutes walk. Park only 500 ft. distant. Good approach through Clinton & Elizabeth Avenues. Convenient School facilities.

Streets graded - cement curb & flagging.
WATER and GAS - Sewer Plans being prepared.
Title - Guaranteed by Title Trust Company.
 Take Elizabeth Avenue cars to property. Bergen St. cross from line to Hawthorne Av. walk two blocks south to property.

Lots 1 to 14 - \$2 to \$5. 20 to 55 - 30 to 38. 170 & 171 - restricted to \$3500 houses. One house on pair.
 All other lots east of Hawthorne Street, \$2000 houses.
 All lots west of Hawthorne St. \$2500 houses.
 All houses to be built uniform distance from street line.
 Stables & garb buildings not less than 70 feet from street front.
 No flat roof houses on any part of the property.
 Only Bergen Street lots to be used for business front.
 No Saloons. Easy terms. \$ to 1000 upwards monthly payments.
 \$ 600 & upwards monthly payments.
 5% interest on unpaid balance.
 Agents on grounds every day.
 12 minutes from Broad & Market Streets.

THE WESTON ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENT CO'S. MANY V.
 HENRY SCHEIDER, VICE PRES.
 GEORGE SCHLEIFER, PRES.

PROPERTY OF THE
WEEQUAHIC PARK LAND AND IMPROVEMENT CO.

Figure 2.1. “Weequahic Park Tract Master Plan” Circa 1903. Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest.

WEEQUAHIC PARK TRACT

ELIZABETH AVE., NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.

Investigation and Comparison Will Convince You of the Great Advantages Possessed by This Property

THE BEST and most available property for New York business men.
18 minutes from New York upon completion of North River Tunnels. Station 2 minutes' walk from property.

One of the most sightly locations in Newark. Restricted to insure development in keeping with its natural beauty.

High grade property offered at terms which place it within the reach of any one who will save something each month. Building operations have been started with a rush and will continue to grow larger. Weequahic Park, with beautiful lake only 500 feet distant, high and healthful location.

The vital importance of proper restrictions cannot be overestimated. The thousands of dollars being spent for improvements of various kinds keep adding to the values.

Future values depend upon desirable improvements. Proper restrictions make good neighborhoods.




TAKE

**Lehigh Valley Train from Pennsylvania R. R. Ferries
to Park View Station, Newark.**

Twenty-third Street - 12.25
Desbrosses Street - 12.45
Cortlandt Street - 12.45

Only Two Minutes from Property.

OR

**C. R. R. of N. J. or D. L. & W. R. R. Trains
to Broad Street,
and Trolley Marked
WEEQUAHIC PARK
to Property.**

Elevated Location Affords Extended View. Streets Are Graded. Cement Walks and Curbs. Convenient School Facilities. Sewer, Water, Gas, Electric Lights. Title Guaranteed by Fidelity Trust Co.

Agents on Grounds Every Day.

MAPS AND PARTICULARS,

FRANK J. BOCK, 800 BROAD STREET,

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.

Figure 2.2. "Advertisement" *New York Press*, October 8, 1905.

Figure 2.3. “Real Estate Ad,” *The New York Sun*, April 8, 1906.

NEW JERSEY—FOR SALE OR TO LET | NEW JERSEY—FOR SALE OR TO LET | NEW JERSEY—FOR SALE OR TO LET | NEW JERSEY—FOR SALE OR TO LET

WEEQUAHIC PARK TRACT

NEWARK, N. J.

Any one of sound business judgment knows that property in Newark, located at an elevation overlooking the surrounding country, easily accessible from New York, opposite a magnificent Public Park, with convenient trolley service, and restricted to insure a good neighborhood and proper development, is absolutely certain to increase in value very rapidly.

Lehigh Valley Railroad "Park View" Station at property, 20 minutes from New York on completion Pennsylvania Railroad Tunnels.

Four Trolley Lines "Mt. Prospect," "Main Line," "Clifton" and "Broad."

"Weequahic Park" directly opposite, 15 minutes from Broad & Market Streets.

No other property, as near New York, possessing the same advantages can be had at anywhere near the same prices and terms.

Streets in new sections paved under City specifications and Parkways laid out in centre of streets, sewers, water and gas mains laid with connections to the curb to prevent heaving up the pavements. Five foot cement walks, electric lights, shade trees planted throughout.

A HANDSOME DEVELOPMENT THAT

appeals to people of artistic temperament who want desirable, properly restricted, residential property.

Appeals to people who are sufficiently far sighted to appreciate what the future growth of Newark will be by reason of the completion of the improved transit facilities now under way between New York and Newark.

Appeals to people who know the benefits of owning land opposite or near a large Public Park.

Appeals to people who realize what the future values will be of property located within easy access of a railroad station, affording communication with New York City.

50x100 foot plots restricted to one-family houses, one house to each plot.

25-30-33-35 foot plots. Two family houses permitted.

No houses more than 2½ stories; no flat roofs; all houses built uniform distances from street lines.

AGENTS ON GROUND.

MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

TITLE GUARANTEED

\$500 AND UPWARDS
according to size and location.

First payment, \$10.00 and upwards.
Monthly payments \$8.00 and upwards,
according to price.

TAKE LEHIGH VALLEY TRAIN, PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD FERRIES and get off at Park View Station.

Or take Jersey Central, Pennsylvania or Lackawanna Railroads to Newark, and take Mt. Prospect Ave. or "Main Line" trolleys to property.

12.25 BOAT, 23RD ST. 12.45 BOAT, CORTLANDT ST.—SUNDAY.

FRANK J. BOCK
800 BROAD STREET, NEWARK

Figure 2.4. "Advertisement," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1909.



Figure 2.5. "Weequahic Park Tract Real Estate Booklet (Turn Of the Century)" *Newark Street Old Newark Web Group* <http://newarkstreets.com/photos/index.php?cat=52>

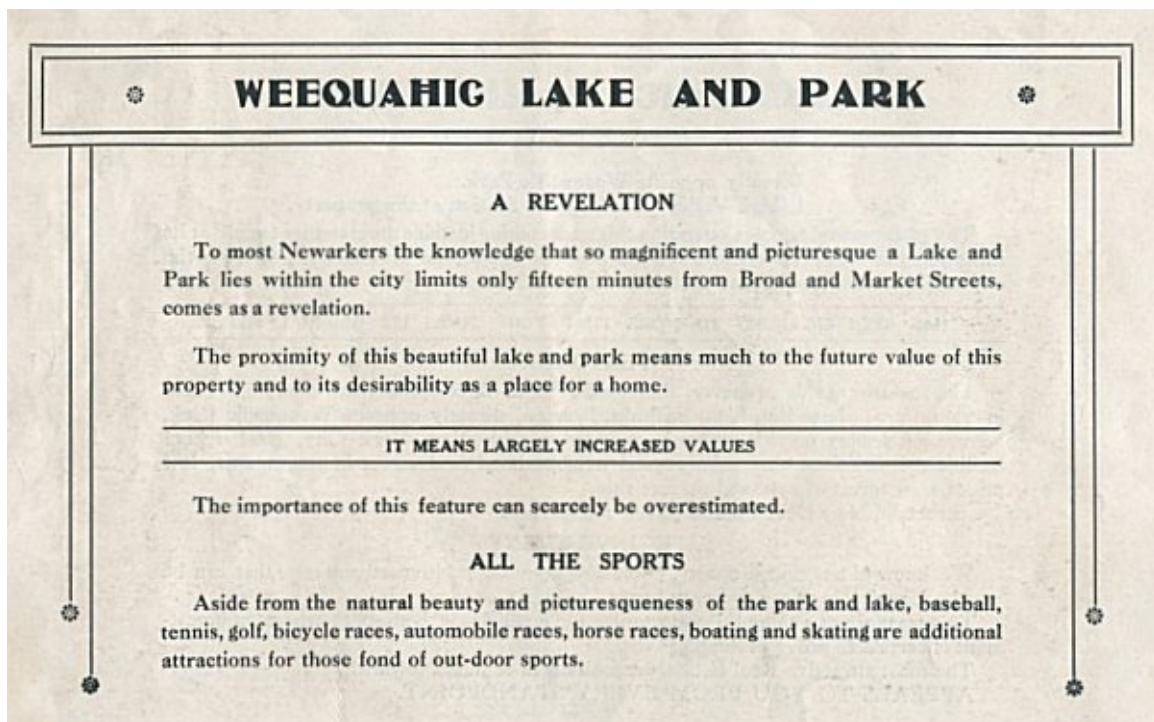


Figure 2.6. "Weequahic Lake and Park"



Figure 2.7. "Elizabeth Avenue," Weequahic Park Tract (turn of the century) Real Estate Booklets. Newark Streets. <http://newarkstreets.com/photos/thumbnails.php?album=199>



Figure 2.8. "Renner Avenue, Corner Seymour. Weequahic Park Tract."



20

This View Shows Style of Street Improvements now Being Made
on all Streets in New Development

Figure 2.9. "This view shows style of street improvements being made on all streets in new development."



Renner Avenue,
Weequahic Park Tract.

11

Figure 2.10. "Renner Avenue, Weequahic Park Tract"



Figure 2.11 "Residence, Elizabeth Avenue, Corner Mapes Avenue, Weequahic Park Tract"

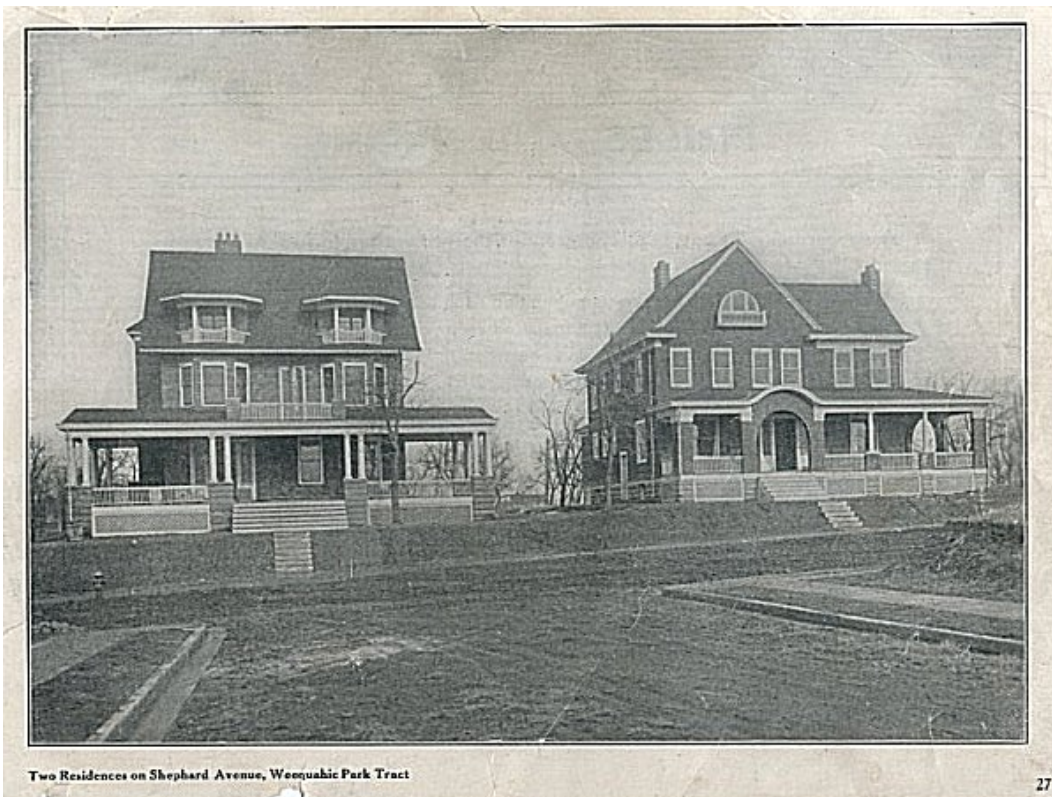


Figure 2.12. "Two Residence on Shephard Avenue, Weequahic Park Tract"



Figure 2.13. "Residence, Scherer Avenue, Weequahic Park Tract"



Figure 2.14. "Attractive Residential Sites Around New York" *New York Times*, April 28, 1912.



Figure 2.15. "Corner of Weequahic Lake, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.16. "A Shady Nook Lake Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.17. "Pavilion Dividend Hill, Weequahic, Newark, N.J." JHS



Figure 2.18. "Rose Gardens. Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.19. "Grove along the Shore of the Lake, Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.20. "Scene in Weequahic Park. Newark, New Jersey" JHS.

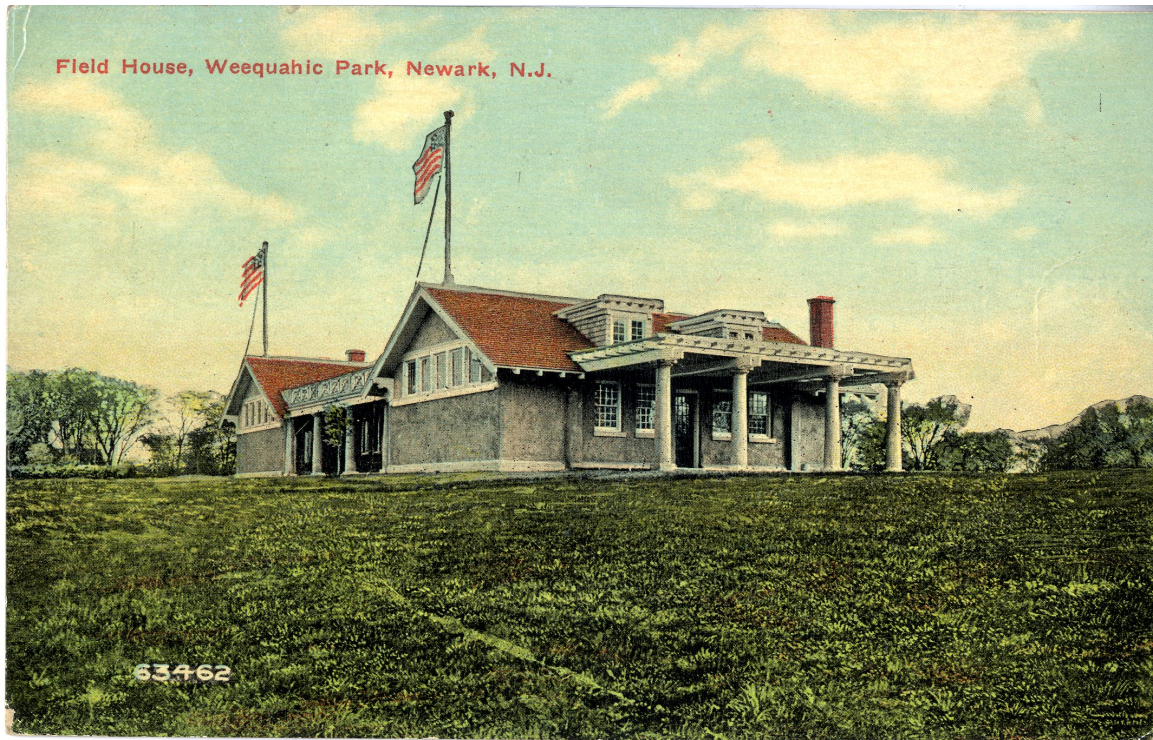


Figure 2.21. "Field House, Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.22. "Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



Figure 2.23. "Boat House. Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.

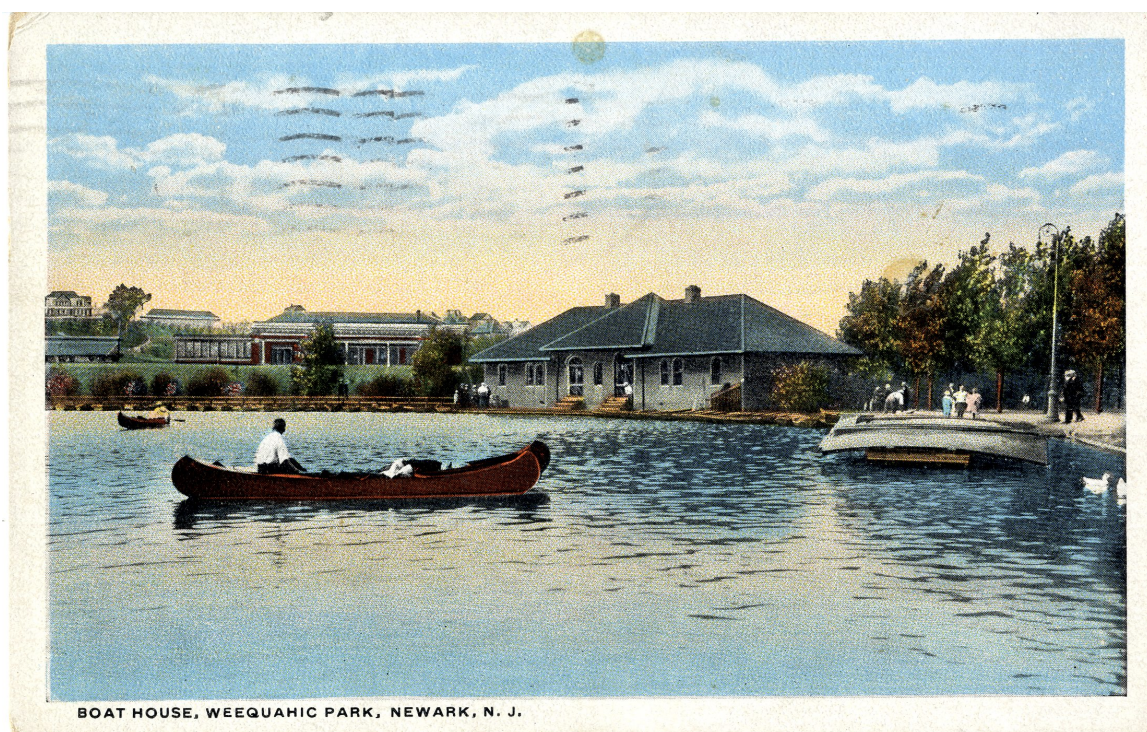
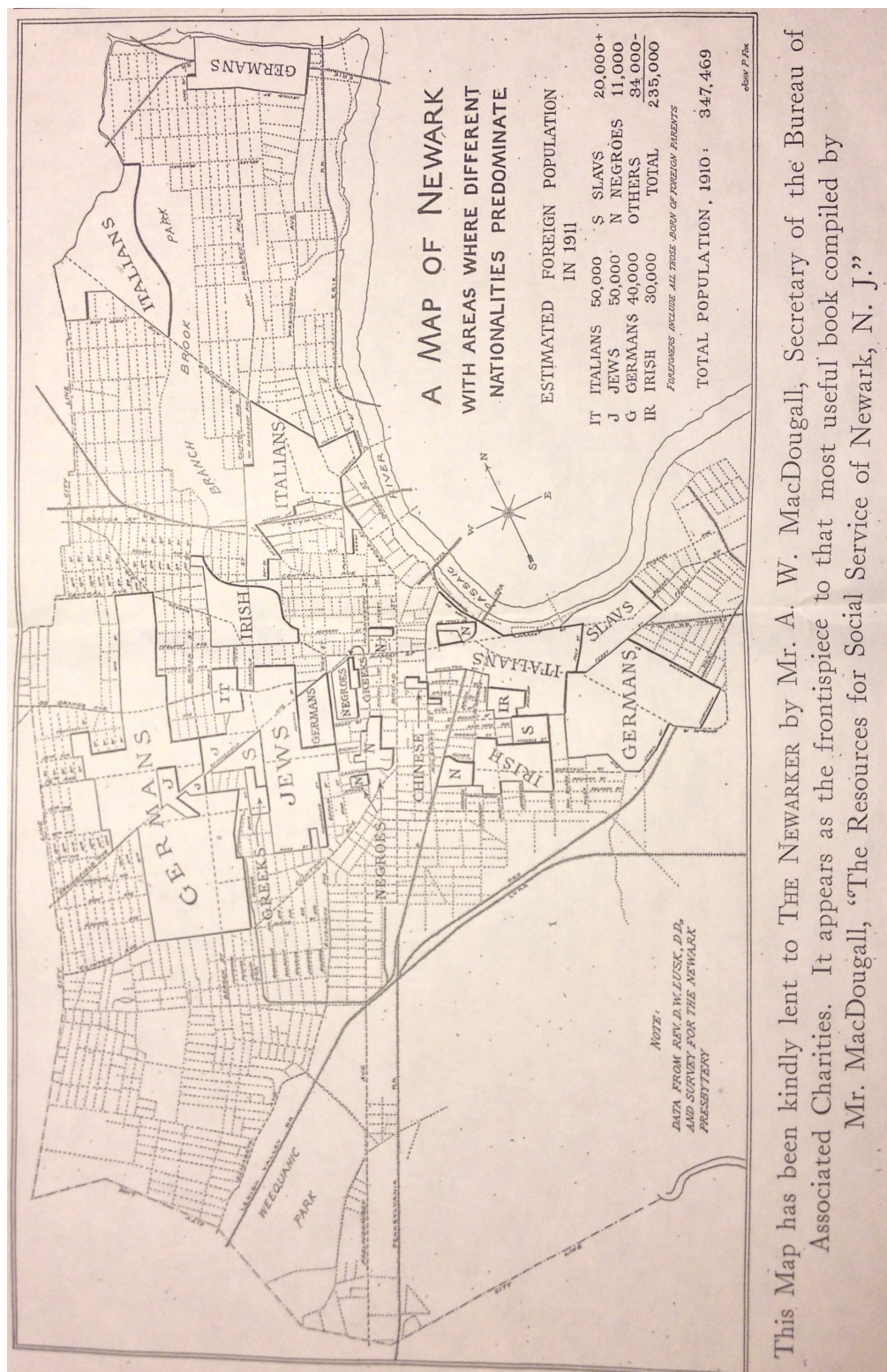


Figure 2.24. "Boat House, Weequahic Park, Newark, N.J." JHS.



This Map has been kindly lent to THE NEWARKER by Mr. A. W. MacDougall, Secretary of the Bureau of Associated Charities. It appears as the frontispiece to that most useful book compiled by Mr. MacDougall, "The Resources for Social Service of Newark, N. J."

Figure 3.1. A.W. McDougall, "A Map of Newark, With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate," 1911. NPL

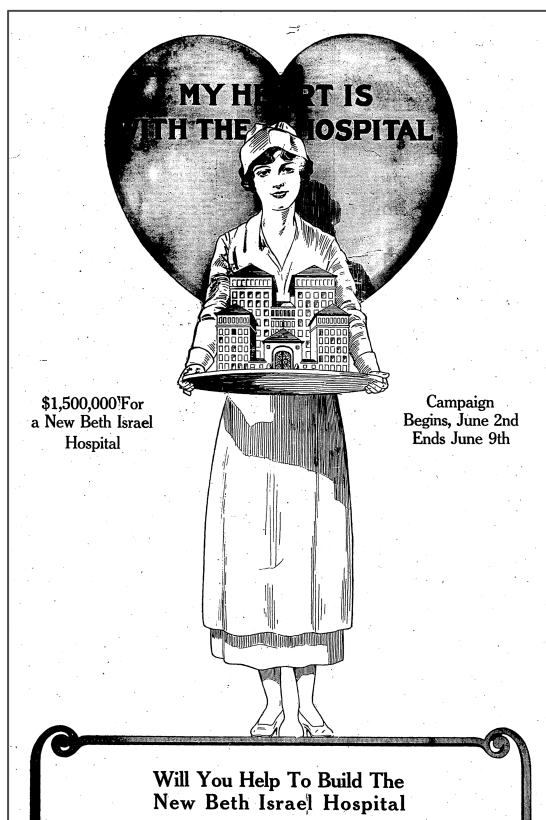


Figure 3.2. Miss Beth



Figure 3.3. Miss Newark Progress

Figure 3.2 “My Heart is with the Beth” *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 30, 1924, 8; Figure 3.3 “Miss Newark Progress-Committee of One Hundred” *Official guide and manual of the 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of Newark, New Jersey, 1666-1916* (Newark, N.J.: Newark Sales and Advertising Company, 1916), 15. <http://archive.org/details/officialguideman00comm> (accessed August 3, 2013)

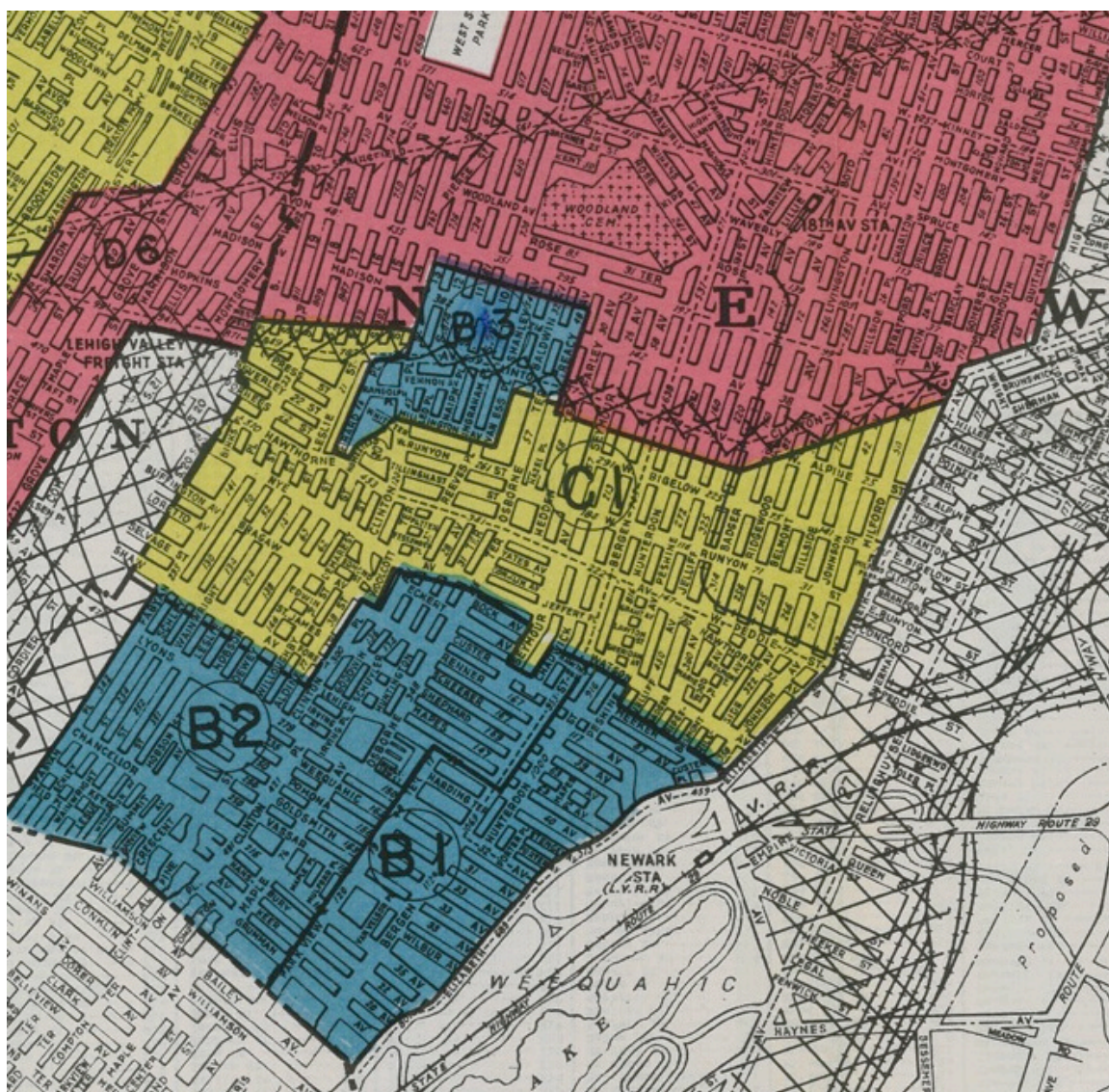


Figure 4.1. Residential Security Map NARA II RG 195 Entry 39 Folder “Essex County, New Jersey Master File” Box 46 (Cropped to focus on Weequahic, Clinton Hill, and the Third Ward.)

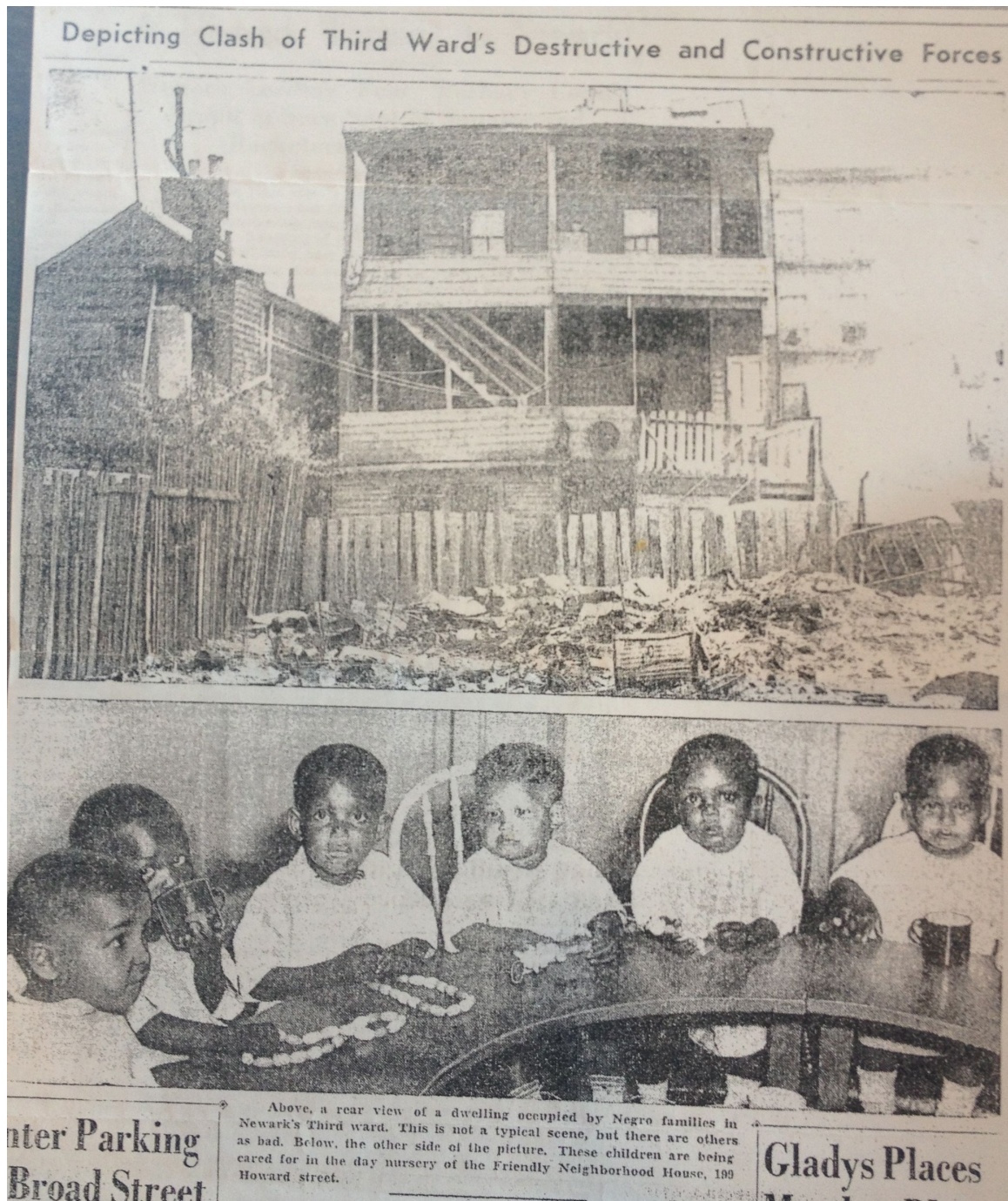


Figure 4.2. "Depicting Clash of Third Ward's Destructive and Constructive Forces" accompanying article "Third Ward a Growing Problem If Ignored, Warning to Newark" *Newark Sunday Call*, May 23, 1937.

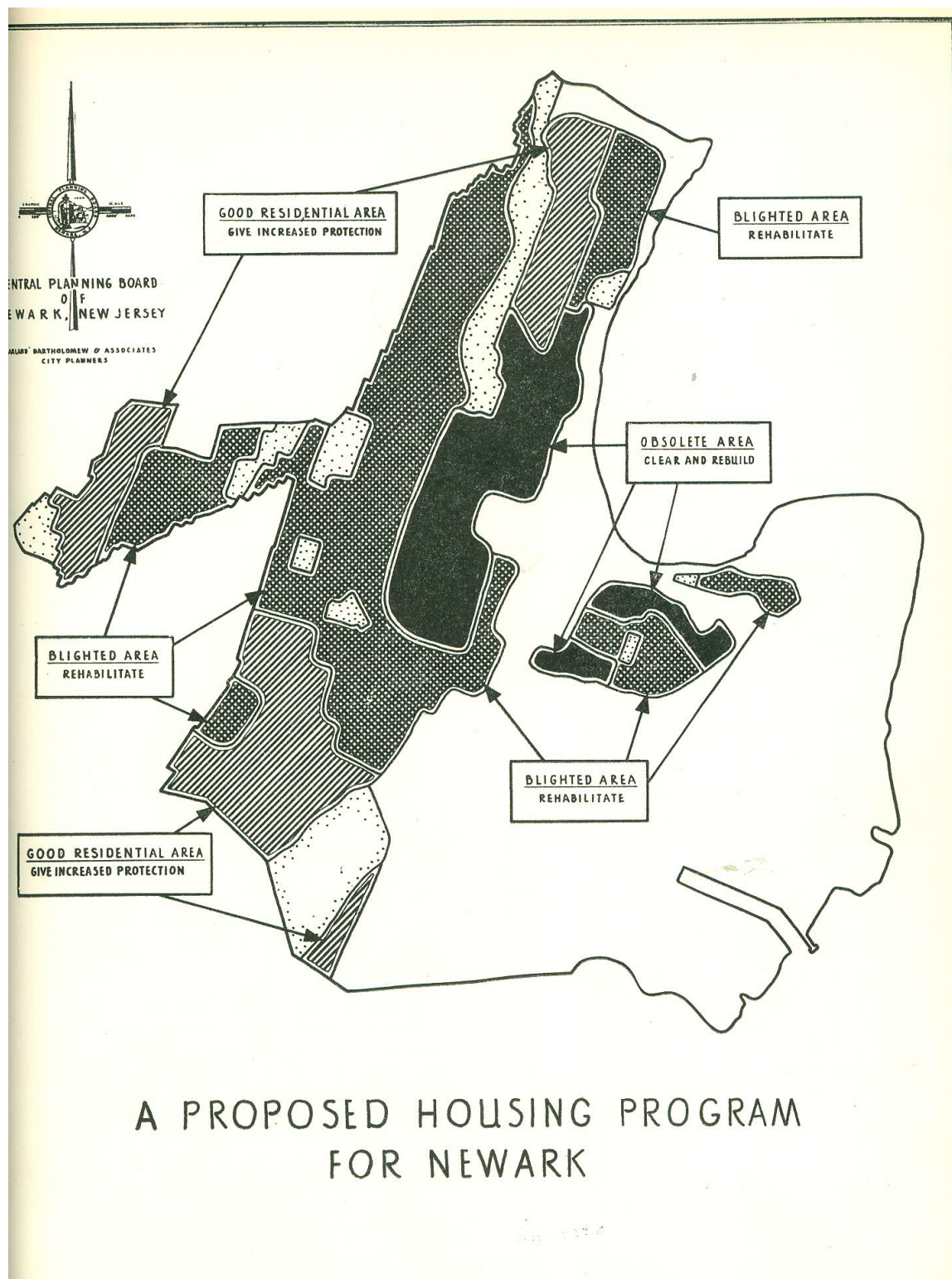


Figure 6.1. "A Proposed Housing Program for Newark" *The Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City of Newark, N.J.* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1947), 43.

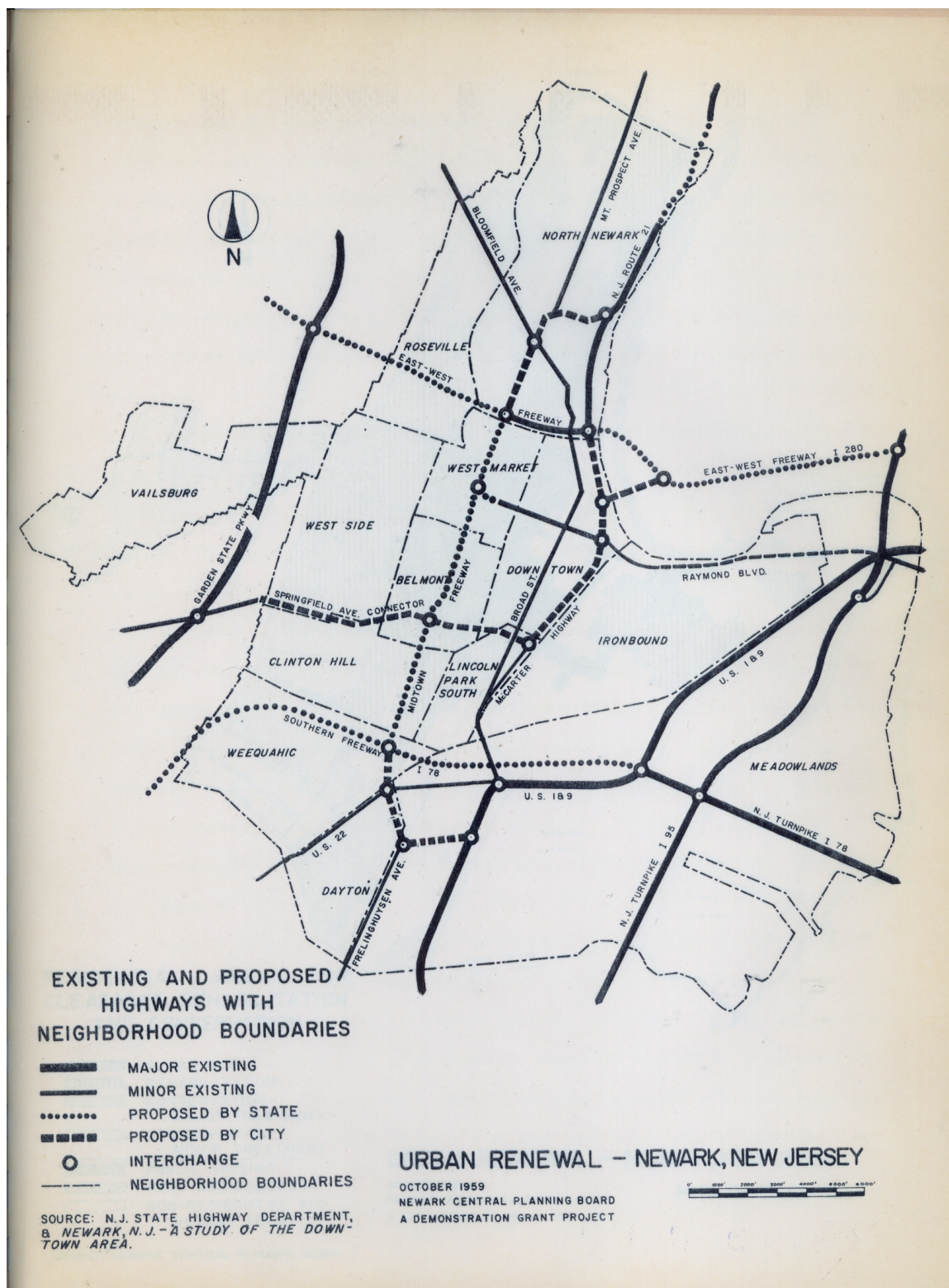


Figure 7.1. "Existing and Proposed Highways with Neighborhood Boundaries" *Urban Renewal Plan: A Demonstration Grant Project-2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959)

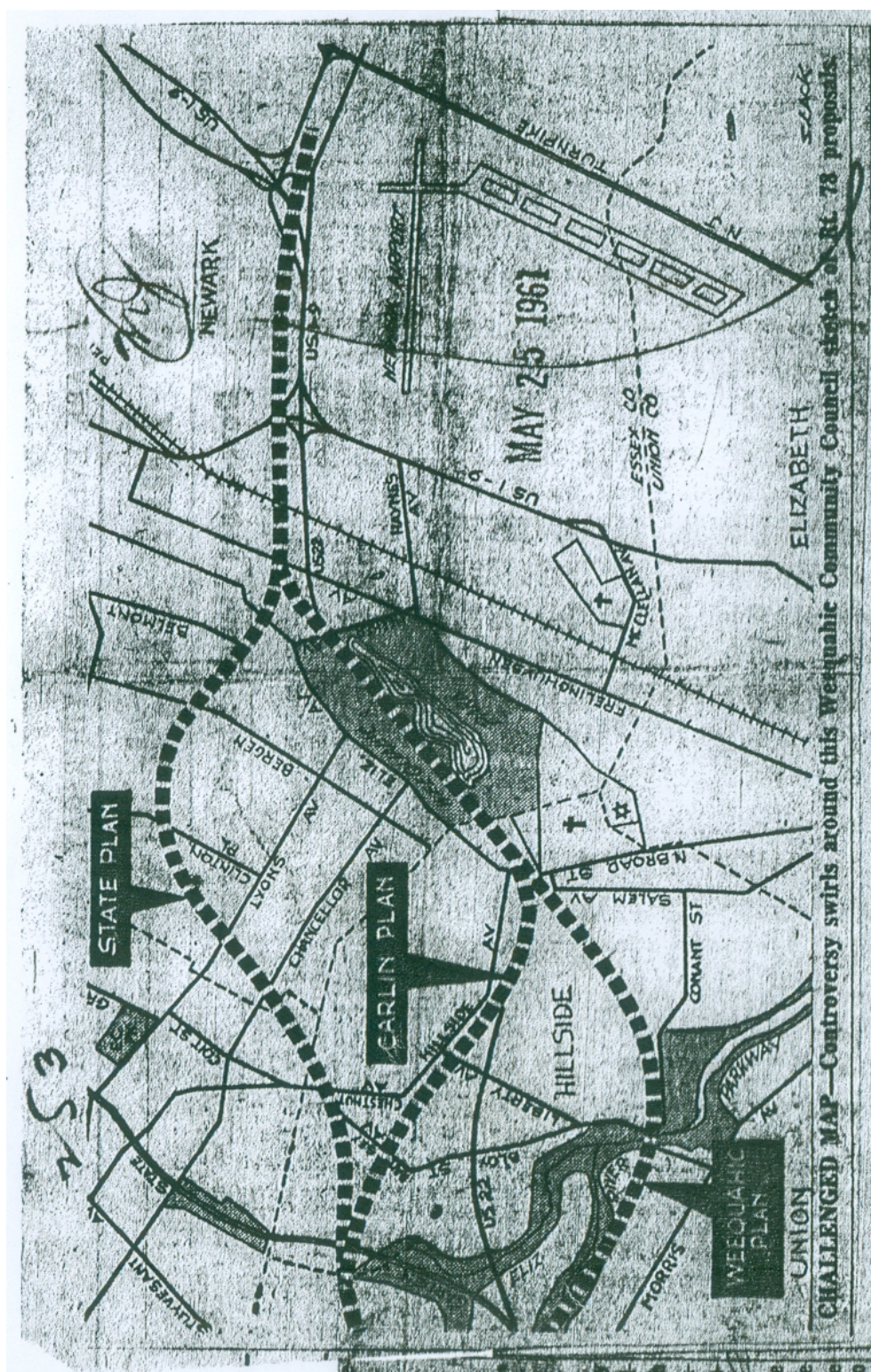


Figure 7.2. "State Plan, Mayor Carlin Plan, Weequahic Plan."

Curriculum Vita

John Wesley Johnson, Jr.

- 1976 Born on February 18th in Belleville, New Jersey.
- 1993 Graduated, Saint Benedict's Preparatory High School, Newark, New Jersey.
- 1998 B.A. History, Rutgers College, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- 1998-2000 St. Benedict's Preparatory School, History and Urban Studies Teacher, Fencing Coach.
- 2000-2003 Masters Student, History Department, Rutgers University-Newark.
- 2000-2003 Office of Residence Life, Rutgers College, Graduate Assistantship.
- 2000-2007 Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child, Fencing Coach.
- 2002-2003 Africana Studies Department, Rutgers University, Adjunct Professor.
- 2004 M.A. History, Rutgers University-Newark.
Masters Thesis: "Sowing Strange Fruit: Lynching, American Identity, the Racialization of Popular Democratic Violence, and the Constancies of Slavery in the Era of Emancipation."
- 2004-2008 Paterson Public Schools, Middle School Guidance Counselor.
- 2007-2012 Office of Residence, Rutgers University, Graduate Assistantship.
- 2008-2013 Doctoral Student, American Studies, Rutgers University-Newark.
- 2010-2012 History Department, Essex County College, Adjunct Professor.
- 2013 Sociology Department, Rutgers University-Newark, Lecturer.
- 2014 Ph.D. in American Studies, Rutgers University-Newark
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