



The American Ethnic Geographer

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Editorial Note:

The next issue will be published in February 1998. The deadline for submission of items for the next issue is February 1, 1998.

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Comments from the A.E.G.S.G. Chair

Welcome back to an exciting and very active fall for our specialty group. Despite the early abstract deadline, a large number of sessions have been organized by our members for the Boston meetings on a variety of topics related to American Ethnic Geography. These include three sessions on urban ethnic diversity, one on ethnic foodways, one on the geography of American Jews, one on ethnic and racial segregation, and one on ethnic landscapes, as well as our distinguished scholar lecture.

This year we will be honoring James Allen, CSU Northridge, as our distinguished scholar. Jim was one of the founders of our specialty group and was chair from 1994-1996. More than that, though, Jim helped lay the foundation for this area of specialization in geography. His 1988 book with Gene Turner, *We the People: An Atlas of America's Ethnic Diversity*, was a landmark contribution to the geography of ethnicity. Their second book, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California*, published in 1997, is a wonderful detailed examination of one of the most diverse regions in the United States. I have found it to be both very interesting and incredibly useful in my own research on New York City. We have asked the AAG central office to designate Jim's presentation as one of the inaugural "state-of-the-art" lectures since Jim has been key in defining what the art and science of American Ethnic Geography would be and since his work speaks to a broad audience in our profession.

I would like to congratulate Carlos Teixeira on another wonderful newsletter and to thank so many of our members for their contributions. An important reminder as we approach the Boston meetings... this is an "election" year for our specialty group so please be thinking about who you would like to lead us for the next two-year term. We hope to have another newsletter out before the meeting with a listing of AEG-sponsored sessions and we have a web page currently under construction. As soon as it is available, we will notify you via email as to its URL. I look forward to seeing you all in Boston!

Until then,

Ines Miyares,
Chair, AEGSG

The North American Urban Kaleidoscope: American Jews

Ira M. Sheskin, University of Miami

The vast majority (95%) of American Jews view themselves as members of an ethnic group, a cultural group, or a nationality. The US Census, however, views Jews as a religious group and collects no data on this group. Thus, the American Jewish community has had to rely on a variety of methodologies to derive estimates of the Jewish population, which are published annually in the *American Jewish Yearbook*.

The Jewish population of the United States has increased from about 4.8 million in 1940 to about 5.9 million in 1996, with a decline of about 300,000 from 1972-1984 and an increase of only 65,000 during the past decade. This 23% increase (1940-1996) is much lower than the 100 percent increase in the total population. As a result, the percentage of Americans who are Jewish has declined from 3.6% in 1940 to 2.3% in 1996.

The spatial distribution of the US Jewish population has changed significantly over the past few decades. The index of dissimilarity indicates that Jews have always been distributed in a significantly different fashion from the total population. From 1940 to 1984, the index at the state level declined by only about 2% from 45% in 1940 to 43% in 1984. It has, however, declined by an additional 3% in the past decade, indicating an increase in the rate at which the Jewish population is dispersing throughout the country.

Changes in the Spatial Distribution at the Census Division Level

From 1940-1994, the percentage of Jews in the Northeast and Midwest has declined. In 1940, 69% of Jews lived in the Northeast and 19% in the Midwest. These percentages declined to 67% and 14% by 1960; 63% and 12% by 1972; 54% and 11% by 1984; and 48% and 11% in 1994. Thus, much of the decline in the Midwest occurred in the 1940's and 1950's, whereas the decrease in the Northeast is concentrated after 1972.

Jews have always been significantly more clustered in the Northeast than the total population. In 1940, 69% of Jews lived in the Northeast, as did 27% of the total population. In 1960, 67% of Jews still lived in the Northeast, whereas only 25% of the total population did. In 1972, these figures declined to 63% and 24%; in 1984, to 54% and 21%; and in 1994, to 48% and 20%. Thus, in spite of Snowbelt-Sunbelt migration, and the fact that the Jewish decline in the Northeast (from 63%-48%) is significantly greater than the decline for the total population (from 24%-20%), Jews are still significantly more than 2.6 times more concentrated in the Northeast than is the general population.

The percentage of both the Jewish and total population living in the Midwest has been decreasing since 1940, at about the

same rates. The percentage of Jews living in the region has declined from 19% to 12%; the total population, from 30% to 24%.

From 1940-1994, the percentage of Jews in the South and West has increased. In 1940, 7% of Jews lived in the South, and 5% in the West. These percentages increased to 9% and 11% by 1960; to 12% and 13% by 1972; to 18% and 16% by 1984; and to 21% and 18% in 1994. Note that much of the increase in the West occurred in the 1940's and 1950's, at the time when the Midwest showed much of its decrease. The increase in the South was most significant in the 1972-1984 period, at a time when the Northeast saw significant decline. This suggests that much of the migration to the West occurred from the Midwest in the 1940's and 1950's, whereas the growth in the South occurred during the 1970's and 1980's, at the expense of the Northeast.

The percentage of Jews living in the South has increased from 7% (1940), to 9% (1960), to 12% (1972), to 18% (1984), to 21% (1994). The comparable figures for the total population are 32%, 31%, 32%, 34%, and 35%. Thus, particularly in the past decade, the Jewish presence in the South has increased faster than the total population.

The percentage of Jews living in the West has increased, from just 5% in 1940, to 11% in 1960, 13% in 1972, 16% in 1984, and to 19% in 1994. The percentage of the total population living in the West has increased from 11%, to 16%, to 17%, to 20%, and to 22% during the same periods. Thus, the Jewish presence in the West has increased faster than the total population.

Changes in the Spatial Distribution at the State and Metropolitan Area Level

In 1940, New York contained 46% of American Jews; Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey accounted for an additional 28%. About 75% lived in the top five states. In 1960, the top five states still contained 75% of the Jewish population (with New York remaining at 46%), except that Massachusetts dropped to sixth and was replaced by California, which became the second most populous state in terms of Jewish population. In 1972, the same top five states still contained 72% of the Jewish population (with New York decreasing somewhat to 42%). By 1984, New York's predominance remained, but declined so that it contained "only" 32% of America's Jews. The top five states still contained 70% of the Jewish population, but two (California and Florida) were Sunbelt states. By 1994, New York's predominance remained,

but declined so that it contained "only" 28% of America's Jews. The top five states still contained 68% of the Jewish population.

Of the top twenty cities in terms of Jewish population in 1940, only two (Los Angeles and San Francisco) were in the Sunbelt. By 1960, four Sunbelt cities (Los Angeles, Miami, Washington, DC, and the San Francisco Bay Area) were found in the top twenty. In 1984, eight of the top twenty cities were in the Sunbelt. By 1994, half of the top twenty cities were in the Sunbelt.

This massive shift in the geographic location of the Jewish population (even as the Jewish population remains highly clustered) has significant implications for the American Jewish community, including the need to create a sense of community in relatively new Jewish communities, increases in assimilation that result from breaking long-term community ties and from living in areas with relatively few Jews, and the geographic dispersion of children from parents and grandparents.

Recent Publication Reviews

Susan Wiley Hardwick and Donald G. Holtgrieve. *Valley for Dreams: Life and Landscape in the Sacramento Valley*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 344 pages. \$24.95 paper; \$67.50 cloth.

Susan Hardwick, one of the more illustrious members of our AEGSG, and Donald Holtgrieve have taught at California State University, Chico, for many years. Their wealth of experience in the Sacramento Valley makes them especially well qualified to write this interesting introduction to the region and its people. In this book they wisely focus on the rural and small-city sections of the Valley and do not attempt to cover the Sacramento metropolitan area.

Most of the book is a historical geography of settlement and economic adaptation in the Valley, and these pages are the most interesting and valuable sections of the book. While most outsiders and many residents of the Valley themselves would imagine its population to be just "white," the authors stress the varied origins and identities of those whose dreams for a better life led them to the Valley.

Chain migrations at different times brought in a great many different groups to the Sacramento Valley. In the nineteenth century there were recognizable Chinese, Portuguese, Basque, Italian, French, Jewish, and black settlements. In the early twentieth century, as irrigation agriculture was expanding, agents sold land to prospective farmers including Russians from San Francisco, Swedes from Nebraska, Mormons from Utah and Idaho, and two separate groups of Mennonites. Sikhs from the Punjab were farm laborers in those early decades, often on rice growing operations developed by the Swedes, but later they became farmers themselves. Japanese also began as laborers, but then moved into more varied and widely scattered businesses. Mexicans appeared first in the Valley during the Bracero program in the 1940's, and their settlement pattern is still closely tied to their work in agriculture.

Since about 1970, four new types of people have settled in the Sacramento Valley: Southeast Asians, alternative lifestylers, retirees attracted to the low living costs, and migrants bringing much equity for investment in land and houses.

The different location of these many ethnic settlements has meant that the ethnic spatial patterning in the Sacramento

Valley even today is complex. Although Marysville is perhaps the most multiethnic of all the towns, the best way to grasp the historical geography and contemporary pattern of these settlements is on a one- or two-day field trip with *Valley for Dreams* as a guide. I would hope that local and regional historical societies and history-geography senior high and community college teachers would do just that. Such an experience would stimulate in residents further interest in and attachment to the region. In addition, this book is a wonderful starting point for a program by Huell Howser, the genial guide who visits many overlooked but interesting places in California in his PBS TV series called "California Gold".

The book also treats key features of the physical geography and landscape changes resulting from varied human uses. Thus, brief descriptions of patterns of wild vegetation, soils, flooding, and contemporary agriculture are included, as well as discussions of the impact of hydraulic mining, the California Water Project, and toxic wastes. Such broad topical coverage suggests that the authors have envisioned the book as a regional geography of the Sacramento Valley. For students and the general public who know almost nothing about regional environmental history and issues, these sections will be illuminating. However, the brevity of treatment of these complex environmental matters and their inclusion almost as addenda to several different chapters mean that these sections sit uncomfortably in the book.

Altogether, *Valley for Dreams* does a fine job of interpreting the region for its residents. Although superficial observation of the region suggests a cultural homogeneity and an amorphous and dull history for this region, a detailed historical examination shows the people and landscape to be much more varied and interesting than expected. I especially commend the authors for achieving something that we geographers are in a position to do very well but too often fail to attempt — writing books for the public about the areas we know best.

James Allen,
California State University, Northridge

A.A.G. Session Report

AAG San Francisco, 30 March 1994; AEG Specialty Group Session #3100

The Homeland Concept

Organizer & Chair: Lawrence E. Estaville, Jr., Southwest Texas State University

Panelists: Michael P. Conzen, Lawrence E. Estaville, Jr., Terry G. Jordan, Ary J. Lamme III, Richard L. Nostrand, Ira M. Sheskin

Editorial Note: This transcription is being published in anticipation of a forthcoming second panel — "The Homeland Concept Revisited" — sponsored by the AEGSG and organized by Lawrence Estaville, Jr. for the AAG meeting in Boston. The panelists will be Richard L. Nostrand, Charles Aiken, Daniel D. Arreola, Martyn Bowden and Stephen Jett.

The discussion focused on 12 questions submitted by panelists and compiled by Estaville. Nostrand tape-recorded the session and compiled this condensed and edited transcription on 8 May 1995, more than a year later.

Homeland concept questions:

1. What are the basic parameters that define a homeland?

Nostrand: Five ingredients: a people; a place; a sense of place derived from adjustment to a natural environment and the stamping of that environment with a cultural impress; some measure of control through political means or ownership of land; time.

Conzen: Essential extra qualities: Indigeneity - when do a people become indigenous? Hispanos in place for 400 years. Pilgrims also in place in New England for 400 years yet we don't speak of a Pilgrim homeland. Wilbur Zelinsky would argue that we have no homelands in the U.S., only cultural regions or areas. The exception would be Native Americans, the first Americans. Exclusivity: How much mixing of groups can take place for the place to be the homeland of only one of them? Elaboration of a cultural system - this is close to indigeneity. Resilience: Do the homelands last long enough to sustain pressures on their existence to survive? Hispanos have a homeland in retreat. Scale: compactness, and relationship of the core area to a wider diaspora.

Sheskin: A homeland requires a special sense of place about an area. People outside that area must recognize its existence as a homeland. The ethnic group must make some visual impact on that homeland.

Lamme: Is our purpose to set up a "scholarly tool" with exact parameters or are we dealing with an idea that is useful—an idea of how people associate with place—a behavioral idea—the key issue is people's attachment to place. Entrikin, Betweenness of Place: objective vs. subjective. Homeland is a great idea; geosophy was not and did not survive. Home is for a family; homeland is for a group.

Jordan: Key to homeland is self-consciousness; this is missing in cultural areas. Homeland is an emotional term. "Folk" conjures up romantic images. A homeland is something that functions—unlike culture areas, it has the quality of a functioning region.

2. What makes a homeland different from a culture region?

Lamme: Asks Conzen why Zelinsky was "not allowing" homelands?

Conzen: For the U.S., Zelinsky discusses ethnic areas and ethnic islands, also cultural regions. He uses homelands in a European context. Sense of place and time are necessary. Lamme's 26 farmers in Upstate New York do not constitute a homeland—missing are parameters of time and scale. If the term homeland means the same thing to everybody then it will have very little utility.

Sheskin: That is why I say people from the outside must perceive the area to be a homeland.

Lamme: A homeland is a type of culture area.

Conzen: Zelinsky's culture regions are multi-ethnic. A sense of place would make them homelands.

Nostrand: Homelands are not a subset of culture regions but a concept rooted in cultural ecology: bonding with land.

Jordan: We do not need more "jargon." There must be a compelling reason for "homelands": Degrees of emotions, self-consciousness, attachments to the land make homelands different from cultural areas. Homelands are special kinds of cultural areas. They need not be ethnic.

3. Does a homeland have to be ethnic?

Jordan: Anglo-Texans are not an ethnic group yet they have a homeland. Deseret was a homeland.

Conzen: Zelinsky talks about new voluntaristic regions in his revised *Cultural Geography of the United States*. On that basis Wilbur would accept Texans as having a special area.

Jordan: Unlike Tennesseans, Texans came into contact—"hostile confrontation"—with Mexicans. This endangered Anglos.

Estaville: Cultural tension was heightened by Anglos intruding upon the Louisiana French after the Louisiana Purchase.