Introduction

Determining Who Is Jewish

Who is a Jew is a question that has been debated for centuries. The answer is not supplied here. But for the purposes of this book the criteria used to determine whether or not someone would qualify as being Jewish and therefore included in this volume are as follows:

1. Buried in a Jewish cemetery.

2. Indicated as Jewish on a census or other records. While the 1910 United States census does not indicate religious affiliation, it does ask the question of language spoken. The 1920 census also asks for the mother tongue of the individual and both of their parents. An answer to this question for some Jews, mostly immigrants, is sometimes noted as Hebrew, Yiddish, or Jewish.

3. Named as a member, officer, or trustee of a synagogue or Jewish organization.

4. A relative of someone identified as Jewish based on one of the prior three requirements.

Use of Records

The sources used most often to find the names of Jewish individuals who lived on Long Island prior to 1919, along with details about their lives,

can be found on four websites: familysearch.org, nyshistoricnewspapers.org, fultonhistory.com, and findagrave.com. A typical example of how these sites were utilized to discover and verify information can be illustrated starting with a woman named Sylvia Walsdorf. Findagrave.com lists several but not all interments at the Huntington Jewish Center cemetery. Sylvia is listed as having lived from 1899 to 1966, but did she live in Huntington? And if so, during what years? At the cemetery she is buried next to her husband, Louis Walsdorf. Putting their names in the search field of all newspapers in Suffolk County on NYShistoricnewspapers.org shows the earliest mention in 1925; but a further search for their obituaries was ultimately found in the *Long Islander*. Sylvia's obituary was particularly difficult to find because it lists her name as Mrs. L. J. Walsdorf, but it uncovered a wealth of valuable information. She was born in Glen Cove in 1899, and at the time of her death she had three sisters: Sophie Greenberg, Beatrice Roiser, and Mrs. David Oles. What was not clear for Sylvia or her sisters was their maiden name, which would be critical to finding more about her background in Glen Cove. At familysearch.org the sisters were searched by first name only and as living together, and the 1910 census record showed their family, named Greenberg, living in Glen Cove, including their parents Max and Leah and three other siblings. To find out more about Max Greenberg, his name was searched in NYShistoricnewspapers.org, and the *Nassau Daily Review* newspaper from Freeport reported that he was a trustee at Congregation Tifereth Israel of Glen Cove in 1931. The article lists six other officers that led to a search of those individuals to see if they lived in Glen Cove or elsewhere on Long Island prior to 1919. Max Greenberg, being a somewhat common name, also matched up with an individual living in Hempstead whose name appeared on a list in the *Nassau Post* of 190 men who were slated to be drafted for military service in 1917. This was not the same Max Greenberg from Glen Cove, but I now had to verify that this new Max Greenberg from Hempstead was Jewish. Seems logical that he would be, given his name; but verification was needed. Back at familysearch.org "Max Greenberg" was plugged into the search field, but nothing about him in Hempstead was uncovered. However, yet another Max Greenberg was found living in Great Neck with his brother-in-law Julius Jacoby according to the census of 1920 (a World War I registration card shows Julius lived in Great Neck in 1918). Julius's wife Rose and Max Greenberg are brother and sister, but are they Jewish? Another document on familysearch.org

reveals that Rose died in 1937 and is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Queens, which is a Jewish cemetery. Because it could not be verified that Max Greenberg from Hempstead was Jewish, he does not appear in this book. But a search that began with Sylvia Walsdorf led in several different directions, finding names of Jews in other communities that might not have been uncovered otherwise.

In addition to census records at familysearch.org, there is a significant amount of genealogical information available that proved useful, including birth, marriage, and death certificates; naturalization papers; military registrations; passport applications; and land deeds. Looking through old newspapers at nyshistoricnewspapers.org and fultonhistory.com provided a treasure trove of vital information as well. Back in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries anything of public record was used to fill the pages of local newspapers, most being published just once a week. This included noteworthy legal proceedings such as jury duty selection, land transactions, assessments, mortgages, taxes, disputes and judgments, legal notices, liens, wills, and licenses issued. Social announcements such as births, engagements, weddings, divorces, and obituaries were common with space also dedicated to letting readers know when local residents left town to visit with relatives or friends and when visitors came to town. New jobs, donations to charitable causes, school records (including grades), and even lists of unclaimed letters left at the post office were part of their editorial content. In the 1910s and 1920s newspapers would publish lists of businesses and homes that acquired a telephone with their phone number, individuals who purchased new cars, men drafted to fight in World War I, and column after column of names of individuals who purchased war bonds. Advertisements in the newspaper, both display ads and classifieds, were also a great source of information and uncovered many details about individuals that help paint the picture of how Jews made a living on Long Island during this period.

Accuracy of Dates, Names, and Spelling

When recording information from different sources it is not uncommon to find variations of important data. Inconsistencies can sometimes be attributed to the original record taker but also to the person whose information is being recorded. There are several examples of immigrants who

did not have knowledge of their own birthday or the year they came to the United States. When asked for this information, required for a federal census, it could be remembered differently when the next census was taken ten years later. In other records, including a petition for naturalization or World War I registration, the answer to a question about a specific date can be seen listed as approximate or unknown. Every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible. But when presented with documents that show different years of birth, or the spelling of a first name (such as "Morris" versus "Maurice") or last name ("Brown" versus "Braun") that are not consistent, judgment calls needed to be made.

Lists of Names

At the end of the narrative for each chapter is a list of names of people who lived in that village or nearby town with their year of birth, year of death (if known), maiden name (if known), and small bits of information about the person. They are arranged alphabetically with families separated by surname in bold face type. In many cases a person was born on Long Island, got married, and had children of their own all during the period covered in the book. In this situation certain individuals are listed twice, grouped with their parents as well as with their spouse and children. It should be noted that since this book focuses on the Jews of Long Island from 1705 to 1918, individuals born in 1919 and later are not included. Similarly, for individuals who are listed, details about their lives that occurred after 1918 will generally not be indicated.

A Note about Geography

Any reference made to Long Island here refers to Nassau and Suffolk counties only. While Nassau County was not established until 1899, there were Jews who settled in places like Glen Cove, Hempstead, and Freeport: all of which were part of Queens County when they arrived. The definition of Long Island for this book is the area constituted by the present borders of Nassau and Suffolk.