Global Philadelphia

Immigrant Communities Old and New

Edited by

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Philadelphia has remained an understudied site of immigration to the United States, yet, immigration has, in fact, played a significant role in shaping the life of the city. Once a center of industrialization and a haven of religious freedom, Philadelphia served as a major port of entry and destination for immigrants throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 1850s, three out of ten Philadelphians were foreign-born (Miller 2006), and during the peak period of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe between 1910 and 1914, the city was the third most important immigrant port in the country (Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004a).

Recently, however, Philadelphia has lagged behind other major cities in attracting immigrants. Across the country, the volume of immigration dwindled between the two World Wars and picked up again thereafter, especially after the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act. Mostly from Latin America and Asia, post-1965 immigrants have brought about major changes to the racial and ethnic dynamics of many urban centers. The foreign-born in Philadelphia, by contrast, remained relatively small during the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike other major cities in the country, Philadelphia largely remained Black and White.

The 1990s began to see changes. During the decade, Philadelphia's foreign-born population grew by 30 percent, from 104,816 to 136,000, while the city's overall population decreased by 4 percent (Patusky and Cefalio 2004).
According to the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2000), foreign-born residents constituted 9 percent of the city's population (one out of every eleven Philadelphia residents). In 2005, the figure increased further to 11 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). The rate at which the immigrant population grew is, indeed, one of the fastest among major metropolitan areas, according to Singer et al. (2008).1

Still relatively few in number, however, immigrants are becoming increasingly visible in the life of the city. The racial and ethnic composition of the city has become more diverse, as has the city's urban and cultural landscape. Between 1990 and 2000, the White population shrank by 180,000, while Hispanic, Black, and Asian residents increased, many of whom were new immigrants from abroad (Brookings Institution 2005). Immigrants have also helped revitalize neighborhoods by investing in homes and businesses and by introducing different cultures and foods (Gupta 2000; Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004b).

Today, immigration is occurring in the context of significant demographic changes and economic challenges. Demographically, Philadelphia lost 22 percent of its population between 1970 and 2000, well above the rate of other cities, such as New York, Boston, and Chicago (Patusky and Ceffalio 2004), and the population continues to decrease. Failing to add as many newcomers as some other major urban areas, the population is also aging more rapidly than in many other cities of the country. Economically, the urban core continued to lose its strength in the 1990s. More jobs shifted outward in the metropolitan area, and in 2000, fewer than 30 percent of the region's workers were employed in the central city (Brookings Institution 2000). As a result, the city's median household income dropped (in real terms) and poverty rose, while the size of the middle class shrank (Brookings Institution 2000). The shift to postindustrialism, moreover, has exacerbated the already noticeable divisions among classes, races, and neighborhoods (Adams et al. 1991). In short, Philadelphia, to this day, continues to struggle as an old industrial city made up of "populations still being educated as industrial immigrants" and "communities still organized around traditional ethnic and racial lines, and still excluded, in the main, from the benefits of the new economic order" (Adams et al. 1991: 26).

Faced with these demographic and economic problems, policy makers have turned to immigration as a means to revitalize the city (e.g., Gupta 2000; Pennsylvania Economy League 2000; Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004a). In 2001, City Councilman James F. Kenney led an initiative to attract more immigrants by proposing a plan of action, including the creation of a city-funded Office of New Philadelphians (Kenney 2001). Although this proposal did not materialize, a nonprofit organization, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, was established in 2003 by a group of immigrant advocates (Philadelphia Inquirer, June 11, 2003). Within the city government, the Managing Director's Office launched the "Global Philadelphia" project to provide more city information and services in multiple languages, and the Mayor's Commission on African and Caribbean Immigrant Affairs was launched within the city government in order to "improve cultural, social, political, health and other conditions for immigrants" (Philadelphia Inquirer, July 1, 2005). Immigration, thus, is increasingly recognized as an important component of Philadelphia's economic growth and revitalization (Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004b). To the extent that immigration will likely play a vital role in shaping the future of the area, it is critical to understand the characteristics of growing foreign-born populations today (Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004a).

In this context, this volume aims to examine the role of immigration2 in Philadelphia's social and economic dynamics. With each chapter focusing on a specific group and a time period, the volume, as a whole, provides a comprehensive analysis of the processes and consequences of immigration to Philadelphia over time. Today's newcomers are coming to a city that has lost jobs and people and to a city that is largely characterized as Black and White. How have foreign newcomers adapted and fared in the city? Who has come to Philadelphia, and why? And how have they affected the city's economic landscape as well as its racial and ethnic boundaries? Our main questions in the volume are twofold: how has Philadelphia affected immigrants' lives, and how have they, in turn, shaped Philadelphia? We address these questions by comparing the experiences of different immigrant communities over the past few centuries. The similarities and differences we can draw from this historical, comparative approach, we hope, will provide a better understanding of the processes and implications of contemporary immigration to the area.

While a burgeoning volume of works has emerged on immigrant populations in New York City (e.g., Foner 2001; New York City Department of City Planning Population Division 2004), Miami (e.g., Stepick et al. 2003), and Los Angeles (e.g., Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996; Lopez-Garza and Diaz 2002), there is a dearth of literature on immigration to Philadelphia, particularly for the contemporary period. To date, most of the existing studies on immigration to Philadelphia are historical (e.g., Luconi 2001; Peltz 1997). The few that examine contemporary immigration tend to focus on specific groups or topics (e.g., Lee 1998; Kibria 1995), and the most comprehensive volume to date, by Goode and Schneider (1994), was published more than a decade ago. Since then, Philadelphia has undergone major transformations, and the city's foreign-born population has grown rapidly. As the settlement patterns of immigrants to the United States have become more diverse, a growing literature has focused on new destinations of immigrants (e.g., Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005; Massey 2008). Philadelphia is an important, though neglected, destination of immigrants, we argue, and understanding the process of their adaptation will elucidate...
Unlike other cities, however, Philadelphia's industry was hit particularly hard. Its manufacturing base declined more rapidly than the nation's as a whole, and the city lost 75 percent of its manufacturing jobs between 1955 and 1970 (Adams et al. 1991: 37, fig. 2.1). In 2000, manufacturing constituted only 9 percent, in comparison to 14 percent of jobs nationwide.

Philadelphia suffered severe industrial decline due to a number of factors. One was its high dependence on the production of nondurable goods (e.g., apparel and textiles which had long dominated the city's economy) instead of durable goods (e.g., machinery) (Adams et al. 1991). Smaller in scale and less capital-intensive, the production of nondurable goods was more easily removed and replaced at the time of economic contraction. It was also more vulnerable to shifting economic environments. In 1947, about 30 percent of Philadelphia's privately employed labor force was in nondurable manufactures in contrast to the national average of 19 percent (Adams et al. 1991).

Another factor was Philadelphia's disadvantaged geography. Located between Washington and New York, Philadelphia failed to establish itself as a regional economic center, and unlike Pittsburgh, it did not have a clearly defined region to serve (Goode and Schneider 1994). International trade also favored Washington and New York, often bypassing Philadelphia.

Furthermore, Philadelphia particularly suffered from suburbanization due to relatively greater discrepancies between the city and its suburbs. Between 1970 and 1980, Goode and Schneider (1994) found that Philadelphia lost more jobs to its suburbs than other major cities across the nation. According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (2006), the rates of employment have increased in all the suburbs of Philadelphia (especially in Chester, Gloucester, Bucks, and Montgomery counties) during the last decades, in sharp contrast to the city's "sluggish" performance. The disparity in income between the city and its suburbs is quite significant, and indeed is greater than most other cities in the nation, according to Logan (2002: 6, table 2). The gap in employment generation between the city and its suburbs is even more evident today as noted in a recent article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (April 6, 2009). Between 1996 and 2006, downtown Philadelphia experienced a decrease in employment, as more jobs relocated to the suburbs. In fact, the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington metropolitan area "ranked fifth worst of the 98 regions studied, with 63.7 percent of its jobs more than 10 miles from the city centers," as noted by the Brookings Institution (Mastrull 2009).

In addition, some have blamed the city government for failing to cope with the changing economy. The city's relatively high taxes, poor roads, poor security, large bureaucracy, and bureaucratic regulation have all encouraged the private sector to flee the city. Instead of investing resources to create a competitive labor force, according to them, the government has been a barrier, rather than a stimulant, to economic change.3

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**FIGURE 1.1** Change in the industrial structure in Philadelphia. (Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Employment Data.)
In tandem with job loss, Philadelphia also began to lose its population. Up until the 1950s, the population kept growing with a significant volume of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as inflows of African Americans who migrated in search of industrial jobs from the depressed economy of the rural South. In this volume, Birte Pfleger also notes that German immigration to Philadelphia declined during the postwar period and continued on a downward spiral with increased deindustrialization in the city. After reaching a peak of over two million in the 1950s, the population has since continued to decline to the level of 1.4 million in 2005 (Figure 1.2). Particularly noticeable in the most recent decade is a loss of young workers; the state of Pennsylvania lost more young workers than any other state in the years 1990–2000 (Brookings Institution 2005).

The 1980s saw economic growth in the city, yet prosperity was uneven, skewed by the legacy of past patterns of employment, ownership, education, and residence, the economic restructuring exacerbated racial and class divides in the city (Adams et al. 1991). This pattern was also observed in the earlier decades (Warner 1968). Jobs increased in both the low-wage and high-wage sectors, but not in the moderate-wage range, and full-time, stable manufacturing jobs were increasingly replaced by part-time temporary service jobs (Adams et al. 1991).

This trend largely continues until this day. The share of part-time employment has steadily increased (from 6.5 percent in 1970 to 11 percent in 1988). The unemployment rate has increased (from 5.6 percent in 1990 to 6.3 percent in 2006) and has been higher than the national average (4 percent in 1990 and 4.4 percent in 2006). And so has the rate of poverty (20.3 percent in 1990 to 24.5 percent in 2005, compared to the national figures of 13.1 percent in 1990 and 13.3 percent in 2005). The overall rate of employment has also dropped significantly and more significantly than elsewhere (Fair Data 2006). In addition, there are growing disparities in unemployment rates among communities within Philadelphia; some neighborhoods are essentially at full employment (3.8 percent unemployment rate) while others have unemployment rates as high as 30 percent. Moreover, household incomes dropped in real terms (Brookings Institution 2005: 9), and the growth in household income has not kept up with that of the nation as a whole. (In 2005, the median household income in Philadelphia was just over 70 percent of the national average, according to the U.S. Census Bureau [2005].) At the same time, relatively high-income jobs (e.g., management and education) have grown in number (Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry 2006; Fair Data 2006). As a consequence, what we see today are growing disparities in earnings (see Figure 1.3). As the figures indicate, income inequality has increased in that relative to the growth in income among the bottom 20 percent of earners, the income of the richest families increased much more. The Philadelphia Business Journal (January 17, 2006) reports that between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, the income of the poorest fifth of Pennsylvania families increased about $160 a year, while it went up $540 a year for the middle fifth and $2,650 a year for the top fifth.

Today’s immigrants, therefore, are coming to the city in the context of population decline, economic deterioration, and growing income disparities. Who has come to the city and why?
Profile of the Newest Philadelphians

Overall Trend

Although its foreign-born residents have grown in number and percentage in the most recent decades, overall, as Table 1.1 shows, Philadelphia still lags behind other cities in attracting them (e.g., Brookings Institution 2000; Gupta 2000; Patusky and Ceffalio 2004; Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004a). The fourth largest city in overall population, Philadelphia nonetheless ranked only sixteenth as a destination for immigrants in 1997–2001, and this trend remains until today (Patusky and Ceffalio 2004; also see Singer et al. 2008: table 2). While the foreign-born made up 36 percent of the population in New York City, 30 percent in Los Angeles, and 12.5 percent in Boston in 2000, just 9 percent of Philadelphia residents were foreign-born, slightly below the national average of 11 percent (Patusky and Ceffalio 2004; New York City Department of City Planning Population Division 2004).

A longer-term trend shows, however, that Philadelphia’s “sluggish” performance in attracting immigrants is a recent phenomenon. Prior to 1980, Philadelphia, compared to the nation as a whole, was consistently successful in attracting immigrants (Figure 1.4). Moreover, although Philadelphia experienced a net loss of the foreign-born, as well as of the native-born, until the 1980s, the number of the foreign-born has recently increased, despite a continuous decline in total population.

The Characteristics of Philadelphia’s Foreign-Born Population Today

In comparison to other cities, Philadelphia’s foreign-born residents stand out in a number of ways. While motives of migration are more or less comparable, newcomers to Philadelphia, as pointed out by various chapters in the volume, are likely to cite the city’s affordable housing and living conditions, its large number and variety of institutions of higher learning, and its geographical proximity to other metropolises, most notably New York, as major reasons for moving here. Important also are family connections and the existence of ethnic communities, both resulting from past immigration streams. The role of religious and secular aid organizations is also frequently cited as a reason for coming to the city, reflecting the city’s strong Quaker and Jewish traditions that have long led in initiating civil rights organizations and assisting refugees (Morawska 2004; Goode and Schneider 1994).

Consequently, a higher proportion of Philadelphia’s foreign-born population are refugees. Among the major sending countries of immigrants to Philadelphia are Vietnam, Ukraine, Russia, and Cambodia, which are main source countries of refugees elsewhere to the United States; yet these countries typically do not top the list of sending countries of immigrants in other major cities throughout the country. Philadelphia is home to a major Vietnamese community and the second largest Cambodian community (after Los Angeles) in the country. Perhaps because of the relatively high proportion of refugees, the foreign-born in Philadelphia are more likely to be naturalized citizens (47 percent) than the national average (40 percent).

Reflecting the national trend, foreign newcomers to Philadelphia largely come from Latin America and Asia. In 2000, migrants from Vietnam, China, Ukraine, India, and Jamaica made up a third of the city’s foreign-born population. More recent years saw rapid increases in the number of people from India, Mexico, Brazil, and Liberia (U.S. Census Bureau 2005) (see Table 1.2).
and particularly noteworthy is the growth of the Indian population. This population, as described by Rasika Chakravarthy and Ajay Nair in Chapter 11 of this volume, has a distinct characteristic; while a majority of recent migrants from India to the United States are high-skilled male workers, a good portion of Indians in Philadelphia, they find, are female nurses from Kerala, recruited initially in the context of a growing shortage of nurses in the area.

In contrast to other major cities, Philadelphia's foreign-born population is more likely to be re-migrants who, after having settled elsewhere in the country, migrated again to Philadelphia. For instance, a large number of Haitians, as Garvey Lundy shows in Chapter 9 of this volume, arrived in Philadelphia from New York City. Like Haitians, many immigrants come to Philadelphia from another city because they often find it more affordable to purchase homes and begin businesses (Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians 2004b). The fact that re-migrants make up a relatively large proportion of the foreign-born determines, in part, the nature of that population in Philadelphia. That is because these migrants, by virtue of migrating more than once, would likely have more skills, as well as motivation or entrepreneurial drive, than their peers who stayed in the original gateway.6 Indeed, immigrants in Philadelphia today, as shown in the next section, are more educated, on average, than their counterparts in other major cities, such as New York.

Another characteristic of Philadelphia’s foreign-born population is the relatively low proportion of the foreign-born among Hispanics/Latinos. This is due to the large presence of Puerto Ricans (who are native-born) in the area. While 40 percent of Hispanics/Latinos nationwide were foreign-born in 2005, only 17 percent of them in Philadelphia were born abroad. About a quarter (24.7 percent) of Hispanics/Latinos in the area were natives who were born outside the continental United States (mostly Puerto Rico) (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). As Victor Vazquez-Hernández (Chapter 4) points out, the Latino community in Philadelphia has a long history dating back at least to the 1890s. While the community is being transformed amid the current inflows of migration from elsewhere in Latin America, most notably Mexico (see Chapter 8), the community, still predominantly Puerto Rican today, cannot be adequately understood without assessing its historical development over time.

**Socioeconomic Characteristics**

Foreign-born residents in Philadelphia are heterogeneous, even more so than the native-born, in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds. A greater proportion of the foreign-born (25 percent), compared to the native-born (21 percent), had less than a high school education in 2005, but they were also more likely to possess graduate or professional degrees (14 percent compared to 9 percent of natives) (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). Overall, foreign-born residents6 were relatively well educated in comparison to the native-born in the city; while 28 percent of the former had obtained at least a college diploma, the rate was only 20.7 percent for the latter. Compared to the national average, Philadelphia’s foreign-born were better educated, in general, while native-born residents lagged behind their counterparts elsewhere. (In a ranking of major cities nationwide, Philadelphia, overall, ranked ninety-second out of one hundred cities in the percentage of its residents who hold bachelor’s degrees.) Gupta (2000) also found that Philadelphia drew a more educated immigrant pool than other metropolitan areas in 1997 and 1998. According to the Pennsylvania Economy League (2000), professional workers with H1-B visas (allocated to high-skilled workers) represented a larger share among the foreign-born in the state of Pennsylvania (22.6 percent) than in other states, including New York (17.7 percent) and California (12 percent). Reflecting their higher educational attainment, foreign-born residents in Philadelphia also earned higher annual incomes (personal income), on average, than the native-born: $19,542 versus $17,291 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005).

The socioeconomic backgrounds of foreign-born residents, however, varied significantly by region and country of origin. While 56 percent of South Asians and 49.6 percent of Middle Easterners had at least a college diploma, only 17.6 percent of those from Central American and Caribbean countries did in 2000. Similarly, the median household income of South Asians, $60,000, was double
that of those from Central America and the Caribbean ($30,000) in 2000. The
difference is reflected in the various patterns of adaptation and community
organizing as discussed in the chapters in the volume (for examples, see Chapter
8 on Mexicans, Chapter 11 on Indians, and Chapter 12 on Cambodians).

Settlement Patterns

Settlement patterns of the foreign-born are equally diverse. While they have
tended to concentrate in neighborhoods that traditionally attracted immi-
grants—South Philadelphia, Elmwood, the Far Northeast, and Olney—a grow-
ing number of them have also settled in higher-income neighborhoods in Cen-
ter City. Together, these areas were home to 31 percent of Philadelphia's
foreign-born population in 2000, after seeing 83 percent growth in foreign-born
population during the 1990s (Patusky and Ceffalio 2004).

Foreign-born newcomers also tended to congregate by nationality. As illus-
trated by the chapters in this volume, the Vietnamese and Cambodians have
largely settled in South Philadelphia and Elmwood, Russians and Ukrainians in
the Far Northeast, and Africans in Elmwood and West Philadelphia. Olney has
long attracted a diverse group of immigrants, including Indians, Filipinos, Chi-
nese, and those from the Caribbean and Latin America, and Center City has
drawn a large number of professionals from diverse countries, including China,
India, and the United Kingdom. Amid current inflows of migration to the city,
some neighborhoods have undergone significant transformation. Rakhmiel
Peltz illustrates in Chapter 2 that South Philadelphia, which traditionally
attracted large numbers of Italian and Jewish immigrants to the city, has recently
received newcomers from Vietnam, Cambodia, and elsewhere. Consequently,
Peltz states, a series of ethnic successions have taken place in South Philadelphia,
while Jewish communities have expanded and diversified into the northern
areas of the city.

The patterns of residential concentration, however, have varied by country
of origin. Generally, newcomers have been most likely to congregate among
themselves when there is already a well-established ethnic community. Conse-
quently, the Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Russians (Jews) are more concen-
trated than others, while the least concentrated are Britons and Germans (Patusky
and Ceffalio 2004).

Impact of Immigration

A growing volume of immigration of diverse backgrounds has had, and is likely
have, an impact on Philadelphia. In a report called “A Call to Action,” Gupta
(2000) discusses various benefits of immigration, including the demographic,
economic, and cultural contributions that immigrants make to the city. Immig-

grants have helped replenish the population exodus in many other old industrial
cities in the nation, and so, he argues, they could also offset Philadelphia’s con-
tinuous population decline. While Philadelphia’s total population declined by
4.3 percent during the 1990s, the neighborhoods that received the most immi-
grants, as mentioned above, actually saw an increase of 4 percent in population
(Patusky and Ceffalio 2004). Yet others (e.g., Goode and Schneider 1994) argue
that the demographic impact of immigrants has been small due to their rela-
tively small presence.

Immigrant advocates have also argued that immigration has contributed to
the city’s economic revitalization (e.g., Gupta 2000; Welcoming Center for New
Pennsylvanians 2004b). In Chapter 10, Mary Johnson Osirim discusses how
African immigrants of various nationalities and religious backgrounds have
contributed to the economic revitalization of West Philadelphia by establishing
businesses, engaging in transnational activities with their native countries in
Africa, and by building coalitions with African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans
in their neighborhoods.

More direct impact may yet be found on the racial and ethnic composition
of the city’s population. Today’s newcomers, as seen in Figure 1.5, are mostly
(66 percent) from Latin America and Asia. The number of Latin Americans and
Asians has steadily increased, making up 15.6 percent of the city’s population
in 2005. Immigrants from Africa, though still relatively small in number, also
grew rapidly, by 75 percent (from 9,175 to 16,085) between 2000 and 2005.
Meanwhile, Whites have continued to decline in number and percentage, and Blacks have surpassed Whites to become the city’s largest racial group. In short, Philadelphia’s population has become more diverse, and this is largely attributable to growing immigration in recent decades.

At the same time, immigration may also have contributed to the growing income disparity in the city. That is because foreign-born migrants today, as discussed earlier, are more heterogeneous than their native counterparts in their socioeconomic backgrounds. Citing previous research, Clark (2003) argues that immigration does contribute to increasing income inequality in the United States. While the precise impact of immigration on wages continues to be debated, immigrants seem to both reduce the wages of natives with low levels of education and push others upward in the occupational stratification system (Clark 2003).

In Philadelphia, as in the rest of the country, income disparities have grown in recent decades. Within each racial or ethnic group, the income distribution has become more skewed with a noticeable increase in high-income earners. The trend is most noticeable among Blacks where the earnings of the richest 20 percent increased over time (as in other groups) at the same time that the bottom 20 percent remained very poor, earning less than $10,000 per household. Indeed, while the proportion of Black households making more than $100,000 annually increased over time, the comparable figure for Black households making less than $15,000 has also increased, albeit slowly (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). Given that, on average, foreign-born Blacks make more than native-born Blacks—the average household income of African-born immigrants, for instance, was $37,000, compared with $27,000 among native Blacks—immigration may contribute to diversifying the socioeconomic profile of the Black population in the city.

The growing income disparity, along with increasing racial diversity, may also have contributed to the decreased level of segregation along racial/ethnic lines in the city. Although segregation, particularly between Blacks and Whites, has been consistently high during the past several decades, it has decreased in recent decades (Frey and Myers 2005; Massey and Denton 1993; Logan 2002). In 1990, 78 percent of Blacks had to move in order to reach an even residential pattern between Blacks and Whites, but the rate decreased to 72 percent in 2000. Likewise, the average Black in the Philadelphia metropolitan area lived in a census tract that was 62 percent Black in 2000, a decrease by seven points from 1980. Racial segregation decreased in many other metropolitan areas, but Frey and Myers (2005) show that the rate of decline was greater in Philadelphia than in other major cities in the Northeast. This may, in part, be attributable to immigration as today’s immigrants tend to settle in boundary areas between demarcated Black and White communities, and refugees, moreover, often settle in the heart of Black or White neighborhoods (Somekawa 1995). The growth in high-income earners among Blacks may also have contributed to racial desegregation, and Black high-income earners, as we have seen, are increasingly coming from abroad.

Much of the Philadelphia story described here echoes what is happening around the country. Immigrants are increasingly entering a divided society, and immigrants, in turn, shape these divisions. This reflects the fact that today’s
immigrants are not only coming in the context of growing economic competition; they are also more diverse in their geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds compared to the turn-of-the-century immigrants who were largely European and uneducated. Manufacturing is no longer available as a major source of stable income, and the gap between rich and poor is growing.

Immigrants themselves cope with these challenges in various ways. As the chapters in this volume show, institution building and community support have always been an important strategy of adaptation. And today, immigrants increasingly resort to transnational connections. As described by several chapters in this volume, newcomers to Philadelphia actively maintain ties with their countries of origin and draw on these ties to establish businesses (see Chapter 10), negotiate their identities (see Chapter 9), and organize themselves (see Chapter 5) as a strategy to adapt in the new environment. The stories of immigrant lives presented in each chapter, we hope, will provide both a historical and comparative framework to understand how immigrant communities have shaped, and have been shaped by, the city over time and across groups.

Presenting the Stories of Immigrant Philadelphia

The chapters in this volume cover immigrant populations that have had a major presence in Philadelphia over the past century. Among contemporary immigrant populations, we have strived to include those that are both rapidly growing (such as Mexicans, Indians, and Chinese) and representative of different regions and experiences (Cambodians, Haitians, Africans). While its coverage is in no way comprehensive (for instance, Koreans and Brazilians are not included), we nevertheless hope that the book provides a representative overview of immigrants' experiences over time in Philadelphia. Our contributors also represent diverse disciplines—anthropology, economics, education, history, linguistics, public health, psychology and sociology—making the book a truly interdisciplinary endeavor.

The chapters in this volume reveal the rich diversity and dynamics of the city's immigrant populations and communities. Not only was Philadelphia home to European immigrants who migrated from the old world to the new from the colonial period through the twentieth century, but it also witnessed the establishment of early twentieth century enclave communities among populations that are often most associated with post-1965 migration to the northeastern United States, such as Latinos. Despite the diversity of experiences that African, Asian, Caribbean, European, and Latino populations encountered in the Philadelphia region, there are some themes that unite these experiences across time and space, namely institutions and community development, identities, transnational ties, intra-group differences and inter-group interactions, and socioeconomic mobility. The book is organized around these themes.

The next section of this volume focuses on community formation and intra-(and inter-) ethnic relations, drawing on the experiences of Jewish, Italian, Puerto Rican (and other Latin American), and Chinese immigrants. These chapters explore the patterns of migration and community formation over a span of a century, highlighting the importance of historical continuity and change in understanding these processes. In Chapter 2, Rahkmiel Peltz examines the development of community and intra-group differences in the Jewish community from the late nineteenth century to the present. He focuses, in particular, on generational changes and transitions in major fraternal, ethnic, and social service institutions among successive waves of Jewish immigrants to the area—from early migrants in the 1880s, to Holocaust survivors in the 1940s and 1950s, to the Soviet Jews of the 1970s and 1980s, and the Israelis since the establishment of Israel.

Joan Saverino, in Chapter 3, discusses how Italian artisans in Chestnut Hill, a secondary area of settlement for this group, contributed to the built environment and material culture in Philadelphia. In her analysis, she explores the shifting boundaries of inter- and intra-ethnic social relations and the class and power dynamics embodied in relationships with co-ethnics and the elite Anglo population of Chestnut Hill.

Exploring the diversity of the early Latino community, Victor Vazquez-Hernandez, in Chapter 4, discusses the focal role played by religious and social service organizations in the Latino enclaves of Spring Garden, Southwark, and Northern Liberties. Organizations such as La Milagrosa, the Hispanic American Fraternal Association, the First Spanish Baptist Church, and the International Institute, through providing social services and sponsoring social events, helped consolidate the Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans, and other Latin Americans into a Pan-Latino community. Not only were immigrant organizations vital in the establishment of many ethnic communities, but they also contributed to the expansion of educational opportunities and early industrial development in the city.

In Chapter 5, Lena Sze indicates that despite the greater diversity within the Chinese population of Philadelphia—from the earlier Cantonese- or Toisan-speaking Chinese to the Fujianese of today—major religious and social service groups have united these populations and come together in the "Save Chinatown" movement. This movement, under the leadership of such institutions as the Holy Redeemer Chinese Catholic Church and School and the Chinese Christian Church Center, have preserved Chinatown from the potential "wrecking balls" of developers who planned to expand a highway and create a stadium in their community. In the process, these religious organizations and others have forged a larger ethnic identity for the Chinese.

Chapters in Part II highlight the critical roles of institutions in the process of immigrant adaptation over time. Birte Pfeger, in Chapter 6, demonstrates
how the German Society of Pennsylvania, the oldest German immigrant aid organization in the nation, quickly became an advocate for German-speakers beginning in 1764. Like the Irish social clubs and the Catholic Church discussed by Noel Farley and Philip Kilbride (Chapter 7), the German Society assisted recent German immigrants in obtaining employment, health care, and legal advice, and provided financial assistance for food, housing, and transportation.

Farley and Kilbride, in Chapter 7, illustrate how Irish social clubs provided recent immigrants with assistance in finding jobs, while the Catholic Church provided education, health care, and family counseling. They further explore the establishment of the parochial school system and many noted Catholic colleges and universities by the Irish, whose significant contributions to urban education remain evident today.

Chapter 8, focuses on Mexicans, a group that has rapidly grown in number in the last decade and a half. In this chapter, Jennifer Atlas carefully documents this migration, focusing on critical issues facing many of these migrants today: health conditions and health care. Drawing on interviews with health professionals and some migrants, she examines the inadequate healthcare services that exist in Philadelphia's Mexican community as well as how national legislation affects access to health care for this population.

Part III of this collection explores identities and transnational ties, focusing on the migration of largely post-1965 immigrants from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. In Chapter 9, Garvey Lundy examines transnationalism among Haitian immigrants. Through interviewing and participant-observation among seventy Haitians in Philadelphia, he investigates the challenges to unity for this population given the problems of political development in Haiti and Haitians' ties to their home and host societies.

Transnationalism and the emergence of transnational identities are also critical issues in understanding contemporary immigrant groups. In Chapter 10, Mary Johnson Osirim explores the development of transnational and pan-African identities based on in-depth interviews with African entrepreneurs and leaders of community organizations. This population has succeeded in making important contributions to the revitalization of West Philadelphia due in part to the significant presence of African Americans in the city.

In Chapter 11, Rasika Chakravarthy and Ajay Nair argue that with migration to the Philadelphia area, Keralite Hindu nurses experience an increase in socioeconomic status relative to the declining occupational status of their husbands. At the same time, leadership of Nair community organizations serves as a vehicle through which men can regain some of the status they lost in the household and professional realms.

Finally, Ellen Skilton-Sylvester and Keo Chea-Young focus on the experiences of Cambodian migrants in Philadelphia. In contrast to relatively well educated Indian and African immigrants in the city, Cambodians are largely a disadvantaged and “invisible” group, Skilton-Sylvester and Chea-Young argue, and they examine why it is the case and how their “invisibility” shapes their adaptation patterns in the city.

Several chapters in this section also highlight the major role of institutions in the establishment of immigrant communities. Religious and social service organizations played a significant role in the development of many contemporary communities in this volume. Chakravarthy and Nair indicate that the Nair Society of the Delaware Valley, the Kerala Art and Literary Association of Philadelphia, and the Keralite Syrian Christians, among other groups, contributed to unity and community development among the Keralites; Mary Johnson Osirim discusses the major roles that the Coalition of African Communities—Philadelphia (AFRICOM) and the Mayor’s Commission on African and Caribbean Immigrant Affairs played in the revitalization of West Philadelphia, and Skilton-Sylvester and Chea-Young illustrate that English as a second language (ESL) programs were central elements in the establishment of the Cambodian community. These, as well as many other institutions, not only strengthened ethnic communities, but they contributed to urban renewal and the transformation of Philadelphia from a largely Black-White venue to a more multicultural city.

Altogether, these stories show how immigrants have shaped Philadelphia and how they have adapted and fared in the city in which they have settled. Although immigrants’ experiences are diverse, depending on the kinds of skills they bring with them, the nature of existing communities, and the reception of the host society (Portes and Rumbaut 2005), there are commonalities they have shared throughout the centuries: the importance of community, institutions, and transnational ties, real or imagined. The chapters in this volume also show how central immigration has been to the city of Philadelphia—and that its significance will only increase in the future. Given the extremely heterogeneous nature of immigration today, immigrants will most likely affect, in some fundamental way, the city’s ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as racial segregation and economic disparity. Moreover, in the context of a globalized economy and a shrinking and ageing population, immigration is a key to the city’s survival and competitiveness. In figuring out how to attract immigrants—and particularly the kinds of immigrants the economy demands—it is critical to understand immigrants’ experiences in the city. We hope this volume will contribute to such understanding.

Notes

1. They report that between 2000 and 2006, metropolitan Philadelphia’s immigrant population increased by 29 percent.

2. Immigrants (in the U.S.) legally refers to those who are admitted to the U.S. for lawful permanent residence under the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Although all immigrants, by definition, are foreign-born, not all the foreign-born are
immigrants. The foreign-born population includes nonimmigrants, such as students, business personnel, and diplomats, who have been admitted to the U.S. for a temporary duration. Neither are all the foreign-born recent entrants. Some have spent many years in the U.S. and are naturalized U.S. citizens. In this chapter, however, we are using the terms immigrant and foreign-born interchangeably, as immigrants comprise most of the foreign-born population (New York City Department of City Planning Population Division 2004).

3. Comments provided by Noel Farley on an earlier version of this chapter.


5. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer who suggested this and other points.

6. See Chapter 10 for an example of these proportions among African immigrants in Philadelphia.

7. This is reflected in two commonly used measures of racial segregation—the index of segregation (or the percentage of one group that would have to move to achieve an even residential pattern) and the index of isolation (which measures the percentage of the minority in a neighborhood where the average member of the minority group lives).

References


Life in the Primary Neighborhood of Immigration: An Introduction

It is an afternoon in July 1997, and I am sitting and recording a conversation in Tsine's South Philadelphia home of fifty years, down the street from her family's house of almost seventy years, the building in which she grew up, where her parents lived when they were alive and which her younger sister still occupies. Tsine was born in South Philadelphia in 1924 and never left the neighborhood. At several junctions, her husband wanted to leave the neighborhood, but Tsine felt too close to her mother to be able to leave. "I don't think that I could stay away—my mother and I were girlfriends. I loved her as a mother—but I—she was my confidante." Tsine's parents hailed from a shtetl near Vinitsa, Ukraine. Her father came before World War I and the mother and their first child were separated from him for ten years. They arrived in Philadelphia in 1923 and Tsine was the first of four American-born daughters. Neither parent had parents or siblings in the United States and Tsine understands this to be the reason for the closeness of the immediate family. "I think that maybe because we had nobody else, we cleave—we were closer to one another, at that time ... and there were a lot of good, good times." The closeness of those first years is recalled by Tsine only in positive terms, although the family was poor.
But Tsine's story is not an aberration. The next day I interview Malke and Froym in their kitchen, about four streets over from Tsine's house, and I learn that we are sitting in a house that had belonged to Malke's grandfather. But even when I walk over two blocks to talk with Freyde, a Holocaust survivor, part of a different immigration wave that came after World War II, I learn that Freyde has been living in her house for fifty years. Her husband died two years ago and her children do not live in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, Freyde would not think of moving. All these cases point to the fact that neighborhoods of primary immigration like South Philadelphia hold special meaning for their residents, be they immigrant or second generation.

Research on factors that promote attachment to place shows that "residing in a neighborhood a long time is not, by itself, enough to create affective attachment." Such feelings are promoted rather by voluntary ties and local friends (Gerson, Stueve, and Fischer 1977: 156). Immigrant neighborhoods during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed an array of locally based secondary, voluntary associations, including synagogues, political clubs, sports teams, and fraternal groups, as well as ethnic schools, recreational clubs, and restaurants. If the prevalence of such organizations was indeed diminished as the children of immigrants aged, the personal recognition and friendship opportunities persisted. Representatives of the second generation at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries are quick to underscore that this is what makes their neighborhood special when it is compared with other areas, despite the fact that the proportion of the original ethnic group residing in the neighborhood is smaller. This characteristic persists in South Philadelphia, Philadelphia's premier immigrant neighborhood of the mass immigration from Europe (cf. Dubin 1996 and Peltz 1998). Today, one hundred twenty-five years after the beginning of Russian Jewish immigration, although most families left the neighborhood, one can still find hundreds of descendants of the immigrants there.

The elderly children of immigrants, who were born in South Philadelphia and spent their entire lives there, sum up their warm feelings toward the neighborhood by pointing to the preponderance of caring neighbors. "Ven di voynt in South Philadelphia, iz yeyder eyner kahntlekh mit du," said Rosa (When you live in South Philadelphia, you are familiar with everyone). "Du iz geven menshn, in ergetsh ondesh hot men gehot fley in de nuz. . . . Farshteteyn ir! Du iz gevon di beste yidn fin gonts Filadelfye," commented Feygl-Asye (Here were real people, elsewhere people were snobs. . . . Do you understand? Here were the best Jews in all of Philadelphia). After World War II much of the exodus of Jews from South Philadelphia was directed toward Northeast Philadelphia and the Cherry Hill area of South Jersey. Basye emphasized the contrast with the insular life in the new neighborhood: "When they moved away to the Northeast, they went into their own little houses, they closed the door, turned on the air conditioner and forgot the rest of the world." The main advantage of the neighborhood of primary immigration to the immigrants and their children, according to the residents, was that people knew you and cared about you.

125 Years of Building Jewish Immigrant Communities in Philadelphia

Although South Philadelphia, as an example of a neighborhood of initial immigrant settlement, may at first glance seem simple in structure, since everyone claims to be familiar with everyone else, closer perusal reveals a great complexity of mutually exclusive social networks, even in recent years when the neighborhood's Jewish population has dwindled (Peltz 1998: 94–97, 100). For example, in the mid-1980s, I found that residents who attended one synagogue would also belong to the Jewish Masonic lodge, but not to the local Jewish senior day center; whereas those who attended a second synagogue belonged to the Jewish War Veterans Post as well as the senior center. Nevertheless, the long neighborhood history demonstrated institutions that served a large and diverse Jewish membership, as well as those that attracted a specific Jewish subgroup. I plan to delve into the history and functioning of two kinds of institutions that provided immigrants and their children with various services, the settlement house and the fraternal hometown association.

By way of contrast with an examination of the neighborhood that housed the first large groups of Jews that came to Philadelphia largely from the former Polish lands of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires at the turn of the twentieth century as well as the institutions that served them, I will present information on the acculturation of new Jewish immigrants to Philadelphia after World War II. Three waves of Jewish immigrants came to these shores under very different circumstances in regard to their relationship to their societies of origin and to conditions within the American society and the Jewish community they found after immigration. First, I will examine the immigration of European Jews who were Holocaust survivors and arrived here at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. Next I will analyze the adjustments made by Jews from the Soviet Union and the former Soviet Union who came to Philadelphia from about 1970 through the 1990s. Last, I will present some limited evidence that relates to former Israelis, a group of diverse Jewish subethnic origins that came to the city from the late 1950s until the current day. All the while I will be keeping in mind the relative wealth of information we possess on the social and cultural effects of the earlier mass immigration of east European Jews. The first boatload reached the Catherine Street docks in February 1882 and by 1924 restrictive federal legislation had all but stopped immigration from eastern Europe.

My focus will remain on the mass of eastern European Jews who arrived at the end of the nineteenth century, thereby neglecting the small numbers of Jews
that arrived in Philadelphia earlier. However, I should mention that the German Jews who arrived in Philadelphia from central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century had achieved much socially and economically by the time the eastern Europeans arrived at the end of the century. These German Jews were far less traditional upon arrival than the eastern Europeans and assimilated into American society rapidly. When the eastern Europeans arrived, the German Jews, ashamed of their kinsmen, attempted to help Americanize them through the settlement house.

During the first wave of eastern European immigration, institutions were developed by the immigrants themselves, such as landsmanshaftn ("hometown associations," called farein—"union"—in Philadelphia) and neighborhood synagogues that provided a warm, familiar environment in which to learn about American society but also maintain Jewish customs that were particular to the specific locale of origin in the old country. At the same time, the welcoming general and Jewish communities organized institutions, such as settlement houses and immigrant aid societies, to educate new immigrants about the new world and provide needed health and social services for successful immigration and acculturation. Two of the oldest of such institutions to serve Philadelphia Jews were the Neighborhood Centre and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and Council Migration Service of Philadelphia (HIAS). Immigrants were able to take advantage of many of these facilities within their neighborhood, initially South Philadelphia. In addition to close family relationships that lent support for the immigrant experience, these institutions, often down the street from the houses in which they lived, provided the members of immigrant families with "intimate secondary relationships" (Wireman 1984).

The subsequent Jewish immigrant waves that arrived in Philadelphia in the second half of the twentieth century, although in many ways experiencing an easier process of adjustment, were not supported by the extensive, embedded institutional matrix on the local level. The groups they joined were in no way as intimate to their specific lives, neither in relation to their connection to and memory of their hometowns, nor through location in the immigrant neighborhood. This observation is obviously in part a reflection of changes in American society during these years in the late twentieth century in which people became less involved in voluntary associations and in intimate, neighborhood-based, secondary institutions, while they populated areas of the suburbs that covered larger geographic expanses and provided little opportunity for getting together in the neighborhood. Although some Holocaust survivors settled initially in South Philadelphia, they moved on to newer neighborhoods, especially Northeast Philadelphia. Even though there were still Jewish residents and synagogues in South Philadelphia when the Soviet Jews first arrived, the Jewish organizations responsible for their resettlement arranged for housing largely in the Far Northeast. Over the years, few, if any, Israelis made South Philadelphia home. The allure of higher socioeconomic status areas was far greater.

At the same time, the experience of the later immigrants reflects changes in Jewish life, wherein the old country of most of world Jewry in the early twentieth century, the communities of eastern Europe, were wiped off the face of the earth during the Holocaust. In addition, the history of repression of Jews in the Soviet Union left the survivors from those communities with little positive feeling for that homeland. Furthermore, former Israelis by the very act of emigration were often regarded by other Jews as disloyal to the nationalist ideals of Zionism and the Jewish people. Thus, by comparing the experience of the different Jewish subgroups during the past 125 years of immigration to one city, Philadelphia, a complex pattern of interaction of historical forces influencing a diverse immigrant group will be charted with other kinds of developments within social life in the United States. Of course American society in the two periods, the turn of the twentieth century and the late twentieth centuries, was a receptacle for the largest waves of immigration in its history. Cultural and social change in those years cannot easily be teased away from the immigrant experience.

I performed the research reported herein between 1981 and 2007. The work consists of ethnographic fieldwork, analysis of historical archival documents, and the study of press reports and secondary sources. The ethnographic research was comprised of participant observation throughout the years, face-to-face interviews using a list of prepared questions in the case of elderly Soviet immigrants in 1981, unstructured recorded conversations in South Philadelphia from 1982 to 1985 and in 1997, recorded Yiddish discussion groups in 1984–1985 and 1997, and a variety of intergenerational education programs involving Drexel University students, community volunteers, and school-age children from 1998 to 2007. In addition, I was a member of the board of directors of HIAS. From 1986 until 1996, I did fieldwork among elderly Jewish children of immigrants in small cities of New England and compared my findings with those from South Philadelphia.

Sticking around the Neighborhood: The Neighborhood Centre

In December 1985 a young arsonist set fire to the building of the Multi-Service Center South, a facility of the Jewish Ys and Centers at Marshall and Porter Streets in South Philadelphia, causing extensive damage to the structure. At the time, I recall that I was not certain that the Center could be guaranteed a future with an elderly clientele for the next several years. However, I was hopeful and deep down inside an optimist, holding the conviction that a few activists can turn community trends around by strengthening the crucial institutions.
Although I had spent the previous year as a participant-observer in neighborhood life, shunning the limelight and certainly not taking on any advocacy positions, in January 1986, while living in Massachusetts, I wrote a letter to the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent, agitating for the Jewish community to rebuild the Center:

My dream is that sometime soon this JCC Center will once again be a cultural center for Jewish children. . . . The Jewish community must rebuild at Marshall and Porter Sts. It is urgent for us not to forget these elderly Jews. Many center members are in their 60s, and we must provide Jewish communal services for them for decades to come in South Philadelphia.

The Jewish community rebuilt the center. Some eleven years later, I returned to live in Philadelphia and was invited by the center director to facilitate my old Yiddish conversation group. As I perused the membership list of the JCCs Stiffel Senior Center I could only recognize 5 percent of the names. One might expect the disappearance of many names from the rolls of a senior center, but my surprise was at the appearance of new Jewish names. These represented not an influx of new Jewish residents to South Philadelphia, but rather individuals who wished to take advantage of the institution’s services.

A visitor to the Stiffel Center in 2008 can still meet members who, in 1928 when the building opened as the Jewish Educational Center #2 (JEC #2), went to Jewish school in the building in the afternoons after attending public school. But the history of the current Stiffel Center goes back much further. It is the descendant of a settlement house, the Young Women’s Union (YWU), founded in 1875, in the northern reaches of South Philadelphia, under German Jewish auspices. It served as a model also for non-Jewish social service institutions for children by establishing the first kindergarten, nursery school, and day care center in Philadelphia (Rosen 1983: 200). These institutions served the Jewish immigrant children from eastern Europe. The YWU, at its headquarters at Bainbridge and Fifth Streets, became one of the initial constituents of the newly formed Federation of Jewish Charities in 1901, and was renamed the Neighborhood Centre in 1918. Through a variety of clubs and activities, it served the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of Jewish family members of all ages (Rosen 1983: 200–201; Greifer 1948; Rose 1994; Peltz 1998: 17–19; 1999: 4–5). With time the programming evolved from general education and Americanization classes to include Jewish programs that would strengthen Jewish identification. Although the center of the immigrant population had moved down toward the more southern streets of southeastern South Philadelphia by World War I, the Neighborhood Centre, after discussions as early as 1923, was not able to move its activities until 1947. First it ran teen programs two evenings a week in the Marshall and Porter Streets building, moving its Noar Day Camp to that location in the summer of 1948, expanding its activities there as the South Philadelphia Community Center in 1950, and three years later renaming the institution at that location the Neighborhood Centre South. In 1965, the Neighborhood Centre and the Jewish Ys combined to form the Jewish Ys and Centers (JYC), with the institution at Marshall and Porter called the JYC Multi-Service Center. From the late 1940s through the late 1960s, when the JEC #2 closed, the two institutions (the Neighborhood Centre South and JEC #2) shared the building.

The personal history of contemporary Stiffel Center members intersects the history of the institution at many junctions. When the JEC #2 opened its doors, it was one of the first independently standing formal institutions for educating Jewish children in the city that was free from the supervision of a specific rabbi or synagogue. Some of the members who received their formal Jewish education there later enrolled their own children in the school. These children, the grandchildren of the immigrants, also went to day camp and attended religious services, teen dances, and basketball games in the building. Between the years 1966 and 1976, the Center was transformed into a full-fledged senior center. Starting with only seventeen senior members, it grew to provide an array of nutritional, educational, health, and counseling programs for several hundred elderly first and second generation Jewish Americans (Peltz 1998: 18). The Jewish school was no longer present at the time when some of its first pupils enrolled their parents as charter members of the early senior center.

Such a long-standing and stable, yet forever changing, institution in this immigrant neighborhood has reinforced personal and group identification. Roze recalled learning to sew in the original Neighborhood Centre building before her parents moved south nearer to Marshall and Porter Streets. Beyle remembered teaching at JEC #2 as a teenager and having Eddie Fisher, who would later reach national fame as a singer in the 1950s, as one of her student cantors. He appears front center in the photograph of the elementary school graduating class of 1941. Other children of immigrants conjure up memories of attending high holiday services with their parents in the large main assembly room in the building. Ester-Beyle and Shmuel-Aron told me that their children, of the third generation, grew up in the building, in the Hebrew school upstairs and the center downstairs. As parents of young children, they worked hard to raise money for the multi-service institution by organizing bingo and street parties. Several times, they fought the decisions of central headquarters at Broad and Pine Streets to close the place, as the number of Jewish children in the neighborhood declined. Ester-Beyle had also been an officer of an independent credit union in the building. Both of them reiterated that as adults there was never a period when they did not go to the Center.

The life cycle of the institution has coincided with the personal and family life cycles of the Jews of South Philadelphia. Just as the better known Henry
Street Settlement and Educational Alliance are thriving today on New York’s Lower East Side, so too is Philadelphia’s Stiffel Center. Neighborhoods of primary immigrant settlement, such as South Philadelphia, last a lot longer than neighborhoods of subsequent settlement (Peltz 2000). Jewish neighborhoods spawned by former residents of South Philadelphia, starting in the early twentieth century, such as North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, Logan, Strawberry Mansion, Wynnewood, and East Mount Airy, have lasted only a fraction of the time of South Philadelphia (Peltz 1998: 15). Jewish South Philadelphia has provided its residents with a stable home for many years. The daily open door of the Stiffel Center, the descendant institution of the original settlement house, reminds the Jews of South Philadelphia that they are, indeed, the children and grandchildren of east European Jewish immigrants, who are spinning further the stories, rituals, and recipes of their ancestors, for future generations to acquire (JCCs Stiffel Senior Center 1999).

The success of the settlement house in supporting the acculturation of the immigrants and the continued ethnic identification of their children and grandchildren, and in serving as a lynchpin for the permanence of the primary neighborhood, deserves further scrutiny, in order to understand crucial neighborhood factors that may aid different immigrant groups. The first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, was formed in the East End of London in 1884, close to the time of South Philadelphia’s Young Women’s Union, New York’s Lower East Side Neighborhood Guild (founded by Stanton Coit in 1886, later called the University Settlement) and Henry Street Settlement (founded by Lillian Wald in 1893), and Chicago’s Hull House (founded by Jane Addams in 1889). All were formed in urban slums to help the urban poor, in those years consisting largely of immigrants. Samuel Augustus Barnett, the founder of London’s Toynbee Hall, applied the word “settlement” to the situation in which professionals, at that time from universities, would live in the working-class neighborhood, gain knowledge of the local life, and thus be able to identify with the residents and work to improve their living conditions. He devised this institution as a way of getting people from different economic, social, and educational backgrounds that normally had little contact with each other to learn from each other, improve the lot of the neighborhood, and thereby also enrich the life of the entire nation. In 1911 in the United States, the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers was formed (McDowell 1991). Thus, the context for institutional development of South Philadelphia’s Neighborhood Centre that I described is part of a contemporaneous movement in the United States and other parts of the world. For the present volume on immigration, the settlement house can serve as a model of a successful community of practice.

I became aware of the concept of a “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991: 100), as I grappled with understanding the role of the group, including my own participation as ethnographer, in stimulating individual and group cultural memory, as an activity that is facilitated by the group practice of Yiddish conversation (Peltz 1998: 216). Although under those conditions, the group practice related to the speaking of and appreciation of the immigrant language by members of the first and second generations, communities of practice operate in settlement houses and in voluntary immigrant associations. Settlement houses are governed by boards that include the public that supports the institution as well as members from the neighborhood. The institution’s constituency is all of the neighborhood’s residents, not just the members of the settlement (McDowell 1991: 593). These agencies operate with the conviction that the neighborhood environment is fundamental to the development of the life of the individual and the family. The development of children occurs almost exclusively within the confines of neighborhood institutions.

The ideals of the settlement have been championed as the basis for the existence of contemporary American democracy. For example, the life and writings of Jane Addams have attracted the social critic of the democratic tradition, Jean Bethke Elshtain (Addams 1961 [1910]; Elshtain 2002). Some critics have argued for the return to the intimate secondary institutions of the neighborhood, such as the neighborhood bar, if vibrant cultures are to be transmitted in the United States, as contrasted with the culture that is promulgated through bureaucratic centers of power (Hewitt 1989: 46–47; Elshtain 1995: 5–21; Lasch 1995: 117–128; cf. Rose 1989: 8). Crucial to the concept of “community of practice” is the practice of learning that is a democratic give and take for all members of the community. “This collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations” (Wenger 1998: 45). Cultural knowledge is situated in the lived-in world, which is socially structured, and learning takes place through participation in the world (Lave and Wenger 1991: 49, 51, 98). Successful communities of practice function and remain alive only when methods are devised for drawing in and teaching (sharing knowledge in both directions) new members. If one posits a settlement house as an institution that shares knowledge of the host society at the same time that it nurtures the specific ethnic group culture, newcomers can benefit from the shared purpose. Such an institution can become the nucleus for the growth of democracy by accommodating immigrants and their descendants in such a learning process. But we can only document its success in the neighborhood of primary immigration.

Philadelphia Farein: Landsmanshaftn, Ideal Communities of Practice

Hometown-based voluntary associations, landsmanshaftn (called fareins in Philadelphia), an understudied topic in American history, represent nevertheless the major form of organizational affiliation of the first wave of east European Jewish immigrants to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and
the beginning of the twentieth century (Soyer 1997). The first of these to develop were often synagogues located in the immigrant neighborhood, known as *ansheys* (taken from their Hebrew names, meaning “groups of people from the place . . .”). These synagogues also offered mutual aid and financial benefits (Kliger 1988: 148; 1992: 31–32). Another prevalent form aimed at meeting economic needs of the new immigrant was the hometown-based free loan society (*Tenenbaum 1993*). The number of landsmanshaftn was astounding. In New York City, it was estimated that one in four Jews belonged to one in the first decades of the twentieth century (Kliger 1992: vi). The number of such institutions in that city alone has been estimated to be as high as ten thousand, and a WPA-sponsored study surveyed close to two thousand such organizations in 1938 (Kliger 1992: 145, n. 1; 11). The leader of the survey declared that there were more landsmanshaftn than synagogues in New York City at the time (Ronch 1939). These voluntary hometown associations fulfilled many functions for the immigrants, including health benefits, burial, free loans, providing networks to find employment, teaching organizational dynamics that exist in the United States, opportunities to congregate socially and speak one’s language and dialect, and sending aid to the hometown. Kliger (1990) has identified a tripartate axis of activity, dedicated to life in the United States, Israel, and the hometown. In almost all cases the leading amount of energy was directed toward learning to be an American.

The first voluntary Jewish immigrant association to form in Philadelphia was a synagogue, Chevra Bikur Cholim, founded in 1861. The second such group, however, was hometown-based, the Krakauer Chevra Beth Elohim, formed in 1876 and named for the Polish city of Krakow. It first secured a location for prayer and then three years later united with the Krakauer Beneficial Society. The society developed a ladies auxiliary and a federal credit union as well as a bowling league and newsletter (Kliger 1989: 30). A list of Philadelphia synagogues from 1934 includes names containing eighteen European hometowns. Of course, others may not include the town name in the synagogue name (*Seyfer Hazikorin* 1934: 45–47). As more fareins developed, some of them affiliated with national fraternal orders (Kliger 1989: 34, 36). In times of war, the Philadelphia fareins established relief efforts directed toward their hometowns and its survivors. During my fieldwork in South Philadelphia in 1984–1985, I found several residents who belonged to fareins, including a few individuals who were officers. I attended a meeting of one society of members that hailed from Prushin-Shershov. The organization had hundreds of members, including the prominent families of builders, Korman and Orleans. Membership in the grassroots farein seems to cut across socioeconomic divides.

During most of the years since the beginning of mass immigration in 1882, South Philadelphia was the hub of Jewish organizational, religious, and business life. Included in this flurry of activity were the majority of the buildings used for the meetings of the hometown associations (Peltz 1998: 19–23). Thus, the farein was an intimate secondary institution, to whose headquarters and meetings the immigrants could walk from home. Here the immigrants could hang out, learn about news of relatives in the old country, get tips on employment and housing opportunities, learn how to run a meeting according to *Roberts Rules of Order*, and just shoot the breeze in their homey Yiddish dialect of the northern Ukraine. A survey of the Yiddish immigrant press reveals meeting announcements of the following local South Philadelphia-based fareins: from the pages of the Philadelphia edition of the *Daily Forverts*: United Tarashtsha Rakhtner Beneficial Association, Zhitomir Beneficial Association, Tolner Progressive Society, Tolner-Dubner Brotherhood (Oct. 27, 1946); First Independent Vinkovitzer Farein (Nov. 3, 1946); Kaniver Zeishtshiber Beneficial Association (Nov. 10 and 24, 1946); Kaharlikter Beneficial Association (Nov. 24, 1946); from the pages of *Di yidishe veit*: Heisiner Independent Young Men’s Association, Zhitomirer Beneficial Association, Branch 2 Independent Natsyonaler Arbeiter Farband Anshey Zhitomir, Zlatopolyer Beneficial Association and Ladies Auxiliary, Sokolikter Beneficial Association, Voliner Free Loan (Apr. 6, 1941); Tolner Brotherhood (Apr. 13, 1941); Independent Krivozerer Ladies Auxiliary (Apr. 14, 1941); Tolner Ladies Aid Society, Keren Beys David Froyen Farein (Apr. 21, 1941); Makarov Beneficial Association, Congregation Tiferes Yisroel Anshey Zhitomir, Tolner Brotherhood Association, Oster mhsh”a Lodge Ahavas Akhim Beneficial, Voliner Ladies Free Loan (Apr. 27, 1941); Kaharlikter Beneficial Association, Independent Aniker Beneficial Association (May 2, 1941); Tolner Dubner Brotherhood Association, Branch No. 2 Yidisher Natsyonaler Arbeiter Farband Anshey Zhitomir (Oct. 31, 1941); Kaharlikter Beneficial Association, Zhitomirer Gmiles Khesive (Nov. 28, 1941).

The Neighborhood Centre in South Philadelphia has demonstrated itself to be tremendously effective as a community of practice, as all settlement houses should be according to design. The partnership of Jewish communal leaders, social work professionals, Jewish educators, and neighborhood residents charted a path that introduced immigrants to the new society and was also able to help support the Jewish identity of three generations of immigrant family members. The farein, a strictly grassroots immigrant-initiated community of practice, directed the immigrants and often their children in developing and balancing their participation and loyalty to three Jewish centers: the new society, the old home, and the new state of Israel. An examination of the theoretical and operational literature on communities of practice reveals the reasons why the farein was such a success in support of immigrant families and what needs of later immigrants might be met by new communities of practice.

Active participation in a neighborhood-based farein, just like “participating in a playground clique or in a work team, for instance, is both a kind of action
and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Wenger 1998: 4). The theoretical understanding of the efficacy of such associations places the value of the process of learning and knowing in the forefront. An analysis of the functioning of the farein demonstrates that learning the ways of the new society can be coupled with activities that strengthen the immigrant's identity both as a new American and as a Jew. It is the operation of learning about the world in a comfortable environment that builds a firmer individual and group identification. The farein is built on all the principal requirements of a community of practice. Participants develop ways of talking about their changing ability to experience life as meaningful, both individually and collectively. They share and learn about their immigrant experience and their role in the new society. The farein sustains new ways of talking about practice, resources, and frameworks in which immigrants can mutually and actively engage within the new society, and not be alone in such activity. It provides for a community in which to discuss and evaluate enterprises that may be worth pursuing and in which the immigrant's participation may be judged as competent. Moreover, the farein anchors the immigrant's identity by providing ways of talking about the learning which is occurring and which is changing who the immigrant is and helping the immigrant design her personal history as it develops within the context of her new communities (Wenger 1998: 5). Within the farein, the group of hometown alumni in Philadelphia evolve practices that become the property of the community. Owning the joint goals and practices strengthens the individual and group identities of the new immigrants. It is not clear that the new immigrant family not participating in the neighborhood settlement house and farein can acculturate as efficiently and in as satisfying a manner if isolated from the resources of such learning communities (cf. Wenger 1998: 45).

Communities of practice are not new. They span corporations of artisans in Rome, medieval guilds, groups of insurance salesmen today, as well as workteams in high-tech companies (Wenger et al. 2002: 3, 5; Saint-Onge and Wallace 2003: 13; Wenger and Snyder 2000). Fareins are attractive to members because they value the interactions that take place at their get-togethers, and as they develop over time, the members share information and advice and help each other solve problems. "Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches" (Wenger et al. 2002: 5). The democratic and local nature of the group provides a context for comfortable sharing of ideas and owning of practices. There are, however, a variety of structures for such communities of practice, and they should be cultivated (Wenger et al. 2002: 12-13, 24-29, 43, 51). Is it possible to plan for communities of practice for more recent Jewish immigrant groups in Philadelphia?

# Holocaust Survivors Come to Philadelphia

The historic experience of Jewish immigrant families that arrived in Philadelphia starting in the second half of the twentieth century has not been documented to the same extent as the mass immigration of east European Jews at the turn of the twentieth century. That wave of immigrants, numbering more than 100,000, was so large that it overwhelmed the groups of Sephardic Jews that had arrived in colonial times and the German Jews that came in the earlier nineteenth century. By the time Holocaust survivor families, numbering a few thousand individuals, arrived in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jewish immigration had been at a standstill for almost twenty-five years, because of anti-immigrant legislation. No careful study has been performed on how the acculturation of the Jews was affected by the abrupt cut-off of arrival of new members from the eastern European hometowns and the subsequent decimation of these hometowns of origin of most Jewish families in the United States. The ambivalence of the more established Jews toward the survivors can be associated with the guilt that the American Jews may have felt, for they too were survivors of this culture. Many of them had lost their own parents and loved ones during the Holocaust. Some survivors that arrived had endured the concentration camp experience, being hidden by Christians, or participating in resistance groups. However, most survivors remained alive by crossing borders and being evacuated to the interior of the Soviet Union. Not only was their war experience far different from that of American Jews, but their memories of life in eastern Europe also separated them. Jewish life in Europe between the two world wars had undergone tremendous urbanization and secularization. The hometowns that the older immigrants recalled were a far cry from the ones the Holocaust survivors, largely people in their twenties and thirties, had known.

In 1953, to increase social contacts with one another and to revive Yiddish cultural activity that most American Jews had abandoned, about one hundred fifty families established the Organization of New Americans in Philadelphia. Each year they organized a memorial event to honor the memory of the Jews murdered by the Nazis. This group spearheaded the commission of sculptor Nathan Rapaport, who had produced the Warsaw Ghetto memorial in Warsaw, to erect the first public memorial in the United States in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. In addition, the group was responsible for organizing and hosting the first National Assembly of Delegates of Jewish Survivor Organizations in the United States in 1970, as well as the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in 1985. Many local survivors gave testimony to the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College, started by Professor Nora Levin in 1979 and currently administered by Josie Fisher, which comprises one of the largest collections of audiotaped testimonies in the United States. In 1980
The side of the life and concerns of these immigrants that is publicly revealed in the organizational bulletins contrasts with the quality of information that we have about the earlier Jewish immigrants. The publications do not show the pains of adjustment, the psychological struggle to remain resilient after trauma, problems associated with raising immigrant children, or much of the general process of acculturation to a new society. This may indicate that the larger Jewish community was not interested in such issues. Additionally, or alternatively, it may demonstrate the fact that the survivors themselves were trying as much as possible to appear “normal,” even to the extent of organizing cultural events and initiating the institutionalization in the United States of Holocaust memorial meetings and monuments. Their public initiatives within the organized Jewish community are quite impressive, signifying a higher level of education than the earlier immigrants and previous experience in European political and cultural youth groups. The organization seems more a city-wide public affairs and cultural group than a Jewish neighborhood lodge of east European immigrants. We must also remember that the survivor families are a minority within the Jewish community and neighborhood; the earlier immigrants had in contrast quickly dominated the Jewish population in numbers. Better understanding of the life and activity of survivor families may be sought in the records of the David Neumann Neighborhood Centre that opened its doors in the midst of their Northeast neighborhood on Bustleton Avenue in 1954. Were there activities specifically for these families? The records of the...
families may indicate survivor participation. What will local synagogue records reveal? Perhaps the Holocaust Oral History Archive will make reference to the special acculturation process of this group. From the limited data I have presented, there is little suggestion of the rich neighborhood life of the earlier immigrants or the intimate secondary institutions that developed as communities of practice.

**Jews from the Former Soviet Union**

Jewish immigrants, most with refugee status fleeing Soviet oppression of Jews, came to Philadelphia over a period of almost thirty years, from about 1970 though the late 1990s. The host Jewish community in Philadelphia, as part of a national and worldwide effort, provided for a variety of services to welcome these newcomers and help in their acclimation. The degree of organization of the host community and the range of services and resources provided the Jews from the former Soviet Union reflect the maturation of the American Jewish community, its acquired self-confidence within American society, its relative affluence, and a politicization with regard to the issue of freeing the Soviet Jews, which had started in the early 1960s. The scale of the organized process of aiding these Jews was far greater than that available to any earlier Jewish immigrants. Philadelphia’s HIAS was the first agency contact for the newcomers to the city. The first immigrants settled in Logan and the Oxford Circle area of the Northeast, but by the early 1980s most were living in the Greater Northeast, near the 9000 to 12000 blocks of Bustleton Avenue. HIAS, after helping with the immigration process, provided basic information in Russian about American society, but subsequent stages of settlement and other services were offered by Jewish Family Service, Jewish Educational and Vocational Service, Federation Day Care, and the JCCs, including the David Neumann Senior Center and the Klein Branch. It was largely professional case workers and counselors who steered these Jewish newcomers through English classes, appointments with the Department of Public Assistance for food stamps and medical help, visits to Einstein Northern Medical Center for known illnesses, and free initial memberships at the JCC Klein Branch. From 1976 through October 1978, the Federation of Jewish Agencies, through Jewish Family Service, arranged for grants and loans for one year. Following this, the federal government provided grants of about $2,000 per immigrant per year (Levin 2003: 129). In the late 1980s immigration accelerated tremendously, with many of the new immigrants moving into lower Bucks and eastern Montgomery counties, along with the movement of the rest of the Jewish community (Friedman and Harrison 2003: xix).

The older Yiddish-speaking Jews from the former Soviet Union who arrived before the early 1980s demonstrate differences within the immigrant group and contrast with Philadelphia Jews who had come with their families from Russia and the newly formed Soviet Union in the early part of the twentieth century. Elderly immigrants rarely had financial resources or a source of employment. They arrived accompanying their children and grandchildren, who were busy finding employment, going to school, and establishing a social life. They had little to occupy themselves except attending communal activities for the elderly in Russian and Yiddish. One such individual, Yankl, had become active in the Workmen’s Circle headquarters across Bustleton Avenue from the Neumann Centre, because he had been exposed to Yiddish culture as a child in Odessa and could communicate well in Yiddish with the Workmen Circle cultural activists. At the Neumann Centre a visitor would observe two mutually exclusive groups having little contact, the new Soviet Jews and the longtime Americans who derived from Russia. Several of the newcomers complained that the American Jews refused to speak Yiddish and insisted that the Soviet Jews talk English. I was made aware of the dire circumstances of some of the elderly newcomers when I met up with Marye a few years later in South Philadelphia. She entered an arranged marriage with an elderly Jew who had arrived in America fifty years earlier. He treated her like an indentured servant and during almost ten years, Marye had little outside social contact and learned no English (Peltz 1981; 1998: 102-105). Both the Holocaust survivors and the recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union found little in common with the older immigrants and their descendants.

As late as 2001–2002, HIAS was still assisting approximately seventy-seven people to complete Affidavits of Relationship for emigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU), although the major wave of refugees and immigrants had subsided. That year only eighty-seven new refugees arrived in the Philadelphia area under the auspices of the Jewish community. Qualitative information at this time, collected by a sociologist who lived in the Northeast Philadelphia neighborhood settled by Jews from the FSU, demonstrates that these new residents have intensified their identification with Jewish traditional practices. They report that they celebrate holidays, go to synagogue, and give to charity. She found that they shun organizations and forums, based on their experience in the FSU, but do participate more informally in Russian Jewish activities and Russian language and culture clubs, stores, cafes, restaurants, theatre performances, films, and music festivals. In addition, she found little transnational engagement, little home country-directed behavior in relation to the FSU or Israel. All their activity was directed to the host country, to Philadelphia life (Morawska 2004: 1388–1391).

A quantitative survey of the population of Jews from the FSU that was carried out near the end of the immigration period highlights the specific nature of this wave of newer Jewish residents in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Contrary to the earlier discussion of Yiddish-speakers, the entire profile was based on a Russian-speaking group who emigrated during the previous
twenty-five to thirty years. Between August 2000 and February 2001, 542 interviews were conducted in Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Bucks counties. Too few were from Montgomery County; therefore, the tabulated data derived from the latter two counties, an equal number of interviews deriving from each. Although the ethnic subcomposition was varied, the study refers to the entire cohort as “Russian Jewish immigrants.” Jews were identified by self-identification; 247 interviews were carried out face-to-face and 294 by telephone (p. 7). Two estimates identify the group as consisting of 31,000 individuals and more than 10,000 households, or 33,700 individuals and 11,700 households. The latter estimate divides the population into 22,500 individuals in Philadelphia County, 8,700 in Bucks, and 2,500 in Montgomery (p. 9). Thus, Russian immigrants represent at least 14 percent of the Jewish population of 242,000. They are by far the largest group of recent immigrants.

If we compare their residential compactness with the older neighborhood pattern of South Philadelphia, these newer residents, after thirty years, are in four zip codes in Northeast Philadelphia, four in Bucks County, and one in Montgomery County. In 1920, after forty years, 100,000 Jews were in South Philadelphia. It would be much more difficult for the newer immigrants to establish the intense neighborhood life of the earlier immigrants. The Russians are relatively young as compared with the current American Jews, 35 percent of the Americans are older than 50 as contrasted with 28 percent of the Russians. Immigrants are usually younger people. The large size of the recent immigrant group is striking: 68 percent of the Russians arrived after 1990 (p. 17). The transnational connections remain high, since 35 percent of the immigrants still have first-degree relatives in the FSU. The Russian immigrants are far different in regard to their education and training when compared to the immigrants of a hundred years ago. In fact, their education is on a par with current American Jews; 75 percent have computers at home and most are employed in professional, technical, and managerial fields (p. 23). Younger Russians identify less with Judaism than do older immigrants (p. 28). Of the Russian Jewish immigrants, 76 percent say “being Jewish” means feeling and belonging to the Jewish people or nation. American Jews, on the other hand, traditionally consider themselves as a religious group rather than an ethnic group. The Russians view indicators of belonging as knowing and remembering Jewish history, being proud of the Jewish people, and remembering the Holocaust. Eighty-nine percent demonstrate a positive or very positive attitude towards Israel, and 90% attend a religious service at least once a year (pp. 33, 35, 41).

Such a quantitative study offers more information than we have for the earlier waves of immigrants. Historically and demographically, however, it is difficult to compare the refugees and immigrants from the FSU with the large wave of immigrants of a century ago. They have available more communal Jewish resources than during other times in their life in the FSU. However, the ethnic-based identity within the family had withstood many attacks from the unfriendly environs. As newcomers within the larger Jewish community in Philadelphia, they were again a minority. They live in specific neighborhoods that are increasingly suburban, without the intense shared social activity of the earlier wave of immigrants. In addition, although interacting with Jewish communal officials more than in previous periods of history, they form far fewer voluntary associations and experience little organizational life that is characterized by intimate secondary institutions.

**Immigrants from Israel**

Almost nothing has been published about immigrants from Israel to Philadelphia. This immigration has a long, ongoing history, starting with Holocaust survivor families who went to Israel after World War II and then came to the United States in the mid- and late-1950s. Zionist ideology has looked down upon all Jewish citizens of Israel who leave Israel. Ayelet Palti, director of Habayit Yisraeli in the Philadelphia area, reported to me that the files of the local Israeli consulate identified ten thousand families (25,000 individuals) who derive from Israel. This represents about 10 percent of the local Jewish population, no small number. Actually, this group approaches the size of the Jewish immigrants from the FSU. In her work, Palti found several groups of Israeli immigrants in different regions of the Philadelphia area that have little contact with each other. In the Northeast are families who derive from Asian and North African immigrants to Israel. They are in a relatively lower socioeconomic class and attend services in a few small Orthodox synagogues. On the Main Line is a group consisting largely of academics and professionals who do not affiliate religiously. There is a new group of young business professionals in Cherry Hill that has formed an organization that convenes in the local JCC. In addition, there are apparel and jewelry storeowners on Market and South streets in Center City, Philadelphia.

Dr. Dina Nevo, a clinical psychologist who has studied local Israeli youth, says directly, “the Israelis have no organizations.” Because of the ambivalence associated with leaving Israel, she found that teenage children of Israelis, both those born in the United States and those born in Israel, do not have proper feelings of loss and grieving that is normally associated with emigration. Yet families of former Israelis do, almost exclusively, maintain social ties with other expatriot Israelis. These families maintain the Hebrew language at home, buy Israeli products, and cultivate an appreciation of Israeli culture. An organization of local Israelis has been formed in recent years that maintains a website that lists area cultural events (www.phillyisraelim.com). PhillyIsraelim has organized concerts, summer parties, playgroups in Center City and Wynnewood, Hebrew-speaking evenings, Hebrew language lectures and movie screenings, and parenting workshops in Hebrew.
During intergenerational, educational programs that I have organized as part of the Drexel University Judaic Studies Program, interviews with a parent and child from one family have pointed to very different Jewish experiences and identifications in Israel and after immigrating to the United States. In one family that immigrated in 2003, the eighteen-year-old son missed the intense activity with friends on the street in Israel. Here his friends are largely other immigrant children, not necessarily Jewish. Americans do not realize the special nature of the immigrant experience. In Israel, people went to the synagogue to pray; here, they find that people attend largely for social reasons. The father has a brother who has been in Philadelphia for thirty years, speaks Hebrew at home, but seems American. The younger children have forgotten much of their Hebrew, even though it is spoken at home. In a second case study the son came from Israel eighteen years ago when he was seventeen. He has recently become more religiously observant; in Israel, he did not find that necessary in order to feel Jewish. His mother had a secular upbringing. When they came to Philadelphia, they settled in the Northeast, with a big population of Israelis. However, in order to feel Jewish, she had introduced traditions into her home in Israel and even more so here. They both agree that here they have to work at remembering that they are Jewish.\(^{14}\)

The limited information on Israelis in Philadelphia points to an immigrant group of diverse religious, socioeconomic, and subethnic backgrounds. They reside in different areas of the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Thus, it is nearly impossible for them to establish neighborhood groups with intense activities. Even after many years of residing in the area, the immigrants report the maintenance of friendship networks with other Israeli immigrants. They also report positive feelings toward their Israeli homeland. At this time, after many years of their presence, the organized local Jewish community is recognizing them as a distinct Jewish subgroup. The absence of strong organizational affiliation within the Jewish community does not allow for meaningful comparison with the groups of earlier Jewish immigrants.

Conclusions

South Philadelphia represents the physical place that has served Jewish immigrants and their descendants as a context for individual and group identification for 125 years. Associated with this neighborhood were two kinds of institutions, one the Neighborhood Centre, a settlement house that has undergone many changes over the years, but continues to serve as an address for Jewish identity. The second institution, the farin, or voluntary European hometown-based group with transnational ties, has afforded its members with ways of becoming American and at the same time maintaining and strengthening their Jewish identification. I analyzed both of these Jewish communal institutions in terms of the model of a community of practice, in order to appreciate their success in fostering the individual and group identifications of Jewish American immigrants, their children, and grandchildren.

As I presented the histories of three other waves of Jewish immigrants to Philadelphia after World War II—Holocaust survivors, Jews from the former Soviet Union, and Israeli Jews—the role of analogous communities of practice could not be identified. In part, this is the case because these immigrant subgroups remain minorities within the local Jewish community, as contrasted with the massive, east European wave of immigration a century earlier. Furthermore, the neighborhood, the place-based locus for the development of such institutions, no longer plays such a major role. But the host American society has also been altered in major ways. The ideology and practices of the isolated individual have replaced those of the community and its voluntary associations (Putnam 2000). Moreover, place within the American landscape, associated in the urban context with the physical and social cues of the neighborhood, was no longer a constitutive aspect of the definition of an American identity, rather it was negotiable, imaginable, or even dispensable (Jacobson 2002: 181–182).

My findings on the legacy of Jewish immigration to the nature of Philadelphia life in general underscore the salience of the contribution of immigrant life to urban affairs. For example, the premier Philadelphia immigrant neighborhood in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was South Philadelphia. The residential and institutional framework of the neighborhood, largely established by Jewish, Italian, Irish, and Polish immigrants, gave the neighborhood its identity. In recent years, newer immigrants from Southeast Asia have populated and in turn identified with the neighborhood. Suttles (1972: 27) has noted that neighborhoods primarily identified with single ethnic groups may actually be home to several ethnic groups, and that these neighborhoods can maintain their identities and boundaries despite shifts in ethnic composition. Immigration has given Philadelphia its strong neighborhood composition and identity. In addition, in Philadelphia as elsewhere, it was often the organization serving the immigrants, especially the settlement house, that was the pioneer in social services. Thus, the Young Women's Union, the predecessor of the Neighborhood Centre and the current Stiffler Senior Center, pioneered such institutions as the day care center and foster homes for all of Philadelphia.

The parallel patterns of acculturation for different immigrant groups are striking. The history of the Neighborhood Centre, for example, is similar to that of the German Society of Pennsylvania (GSP; see Pfleger, Chapter 6 of this volume). The wealthier and more Americanized founders tried to clean up the act of their newly arrived brethren, largely serving to teach them English, prepare them for naturalization, and aiding them in shedding their old world ways. Both the Neighborhood Centre and GSP suffered from staying on in the immigrant neighborhood after the immigrants themselves had moved on. The Neighborhood
Centre, however, eventually transformed itself into a Jewish culture-based organization, serving the newly expressed ethnic interests of a latter day ethnic America. Both organizations, however, competed with the more popular, hometown-based churches and synagogues and social and self-help clubs, the farein and Vereine, respectively (note the cognate identities of these words).

The new wave of immigration to the United States since 1965 (Waters and Ueda 2007) has much that it can learn from the experience of the primary wave of Jewish immigration to Philadelphia. The cultivation of communities of practice guarantees continual learning and growth for groups in a changing environment. It is possible that the Jewish waves of recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Israel may organize their residential settlement to constitute pockets of suburban ethnic enclaves analogous to the former urban ethnic enclaves, such as Jewish South Philadelphia (Alba and Denton 2004: 241, 253). Sociology is dependent on history and vice versa. The creative solutions that previous immigrant groups have evolved for becoming American and maintaining a Jewish identity may yet play a role in the futures of the newer groups.

Notes

1. During 1997 my research was supported by a fellowship from the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and a summer grant from the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History of Temple University. Over the years, the archival collections I consulted were located at the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center, the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, the Urban Archives at Temple University, the American Jewish Historical Society, and the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. I facilitated a Yiddish discussion group, A Gleyzele Tey, at the Multi-Service Center of the Jewish Ys and Centers (later the JCCs Stifler Senior Center) during 1984–1985 and in the spring of 1997 and monthly after that through 2007.


5. Ibid.

6. Bikkarim, the Record of the Thirteenth Graduating Class, Jewish Educational Center No. 2, a constituent of the Associated Talmud Torahs, Philadelphia, PA, June 1941.

7. By 2007, there are signs of the diminishing nature of the South Philadelphia Jewish institutions. The local meetings of the Masons and Jewish War Veterans had ceased by the mid-1990s. However, from 1984 until 2005, three synagogues functioned in the heart of the neighborhood near the JCCs Stifler Center. Because of the absence of organizing leaders, two have stopped services. In 2006, Shivtei Yeshuron-Heisiner-Ezras Israel experienced the unexpected death of its “youthful” organizer, who had only been in his mid-sixties. The building had opened its doors ninety years earlier. In April 2007, Adath Shalom at Marshall and Ritner Streets was sold to a Buddhist temple, demonstrating the common ethnic succession within immigrant neighborhoods. The statues of two Asian felines ceremoniously guard the entrance. Thus ended the more than eighty-year life of a synagogue that started out as di litvishe shul (the Lithuanian synagogue), Beis Shmuel. At the time of this writing, only Y.P.C. (Young People’s Congregation) Shari Eli at Franklin and Moyamensing Streets convenes in the neighborhood. Its guiding force is a member of the third generation in his mid-fifties who was born in the neighborhood and is the son of one of my informants, a child of immigrants that I interviewed twenty-two years ago. There are four synagogues started by east European immigrants more than a hundred ten years ago that are active on Spruce, Pine, and Lombard Streets; however, that neighborhood, although originally considered South Philadelphia, has been identified as Center City for most of the past century (cf. Peltz 1998: 15–17).

There are reports at the time that I am writing this chapter that the last long-standing Jewish kosher delicatessen and bakery will be closing on New York’s Lower East Side, an analogous neighborhood of primary Jewish immigrant settlement, that developed in the same years as South Philadelphia (Salkin 2007). We may be near the end of the maximum lifetimes of urban Jewish immigrant neighborhoods in the United States. However, neighboring Italian South Philadelphia, immediately to the west of Jewish South Philadelphia, whose famed Italian Market has already changed its ethnic composition to Mexican American, remains an Italian American residential neighborhood of primary settlement.

8. The observation that most Philadelphia Jews by dint of chain migration derive from this region was first made by Tabak (1983: 51). My study of Yiddish dialect usage confirmed this (Peltz 1990).


12. Habayit Yisraeli (“The Israeli Home”) is a project of the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption that promotes educational and cultural programs with the goal of attracting former Israelis to return home. I thank Ayelet Palti for the interview on May 18, 2007, Bala Cyanwyd, PA.

13. Phone interview with Dr. Dina Nevo, June 18, 2007.


References


In October 2004, I attended the eightieth anniversary celebration banquet of the Venetian Social Club in Chestnut Hill, a neighborhood in the northwest corner of Philadelphia (see Figure 3.1). For the benefit of the multigenerational gathering, the second floor hall had been transformed into a mini exhibition of early photographs of the community on the Hill. At one end of the room was a monitor that endlessly replayed a vacation video taken by one of the members during the annual celebration in Poffabro, a northern Italian village in the Dolomite Mountains of the Friuli region, from which this Italian American community originated.

The community marks its beginning in Philadelphia with Maximilian Roman, a stonemason who emigrated from Poffabro to Chestnut Hill in 1890 to work in the booming construction industry. In a classic story of chain migration, Roman supposedly urged his fellow townspeople in a letter to come to Chestnut Hill: “This is a good place to live and work. You would do well to come here.” As a result of his invitation, “between 1891 and 1906 nearly 200 families totaling about 1000 persons emigrated from Poffabro and surrounding towns to live and work in Chestnut Hill” (Venetian Social Club 1974).

When the immigrant Friulani arrived on the Hill, they found a landscape dominated by stone quarries and construction taking shape from rock, often being excavated on site. The legacy in stone that is Chestnut Hill is the embodiment of the lived experience of these Friulani. Growing up in mountain villages carved from the Dolomia stone, they arrived in Chestnut Hill as experienced stoneworkers and tile setters. They adapted their knowledge of working the stone of the Dolomia to cut and carve the brittle local schist in the Wissahickon Valley. Stone carving was passed from fathers to sons, and as Herbert Lorenzon (2002b: 6), a second generation Friulani who began carving by age ten or eleven, told me, “It’s either in your hands or not.”

If the ability to carve is in the hands, the emotions tied to place are in the heart. The presence of Poffabro in the midst of the eightieth anniversary celebration of the community’s beloved Venetian Club on the Hill was not simply an evocation of a distant past or a faraway landscape. Modern technology allowed the virtual inclusion of a place that has remained real in their lives and in their emotions, a place that has taken on the mantle of the mythical in their imaginations. The evening was filled with public reminiscences as well as privately expressed memories about Chestnut Hill, the Venetian Club, summer homes in Poffabro, and the beauty of that Italian village. Over the many decades in the
United States, the Friulani built a new homeplace while maintaining attachment to the one they had left. Both locales, central to the community's heart, are wrought in stone. It is through stone that people identify who they are and who their families are and their connections to Chestnut Hill and to Friuli.

Approaching the material landscape as an embodiment of memory and a search for meaning, this paper uses this landscape of stone to demonstrate a connection between Italian American ethnicity and place. By using a case study of Italian immigration and settlement, specifically the Friulani to Chestnut Hill, we will see how the relationship between ethnicity and place is complicated, layered, emotionally laden, and intensely personal. The connection must be read in terms of the shifting boundaries of inter- and intra-ethnic social relations and issues of power and class again inscribed in the neighborhood landscape. It involves transnational ties and the home paese writ mythical manifested in material locality. We will see how the Italian immigrants transformed the local landscape, and how and why it was the northern Friulani Italian identity that was encoded primarily on the landscape (as opposed to the identity of the southern Italians who lived on the Hill), how ethnic difference was marked spatially during the early first half of the twentieth century; and how it remains and is remembered today. Given the unique state of the physical preservation of the built environment in Chestnut Hill, this neighborhood provides an excellent opportunity to articulate how ethnicity intersects with place, how difference is delineated in space, and how places that once were are kept alive in memory.

Clifford Geertz (1996: 262) has said, "For it is still the case that no one lives in the world in general. Everybody . . . lives in some confined and limited stretch of it—'the world around here.'" Geertz implies that in the past this was even more the case. We will see how it was certainly true for Chestnut Hill in the early twentieth century. In looking at the particularity of place—that is, by attempting to understand how people root themselves to place, transform it, and attach meaning to places they inhabit—we can gain new understanding of how identity is formed and tied to place.

One way of studying identity is by teasing out the boundaries of social relations (Barth 1969) as they are located in space. I am interested in identity formation and in particular the production of interethnic (between Italian immigrants and the Other) and intra-ethnic (between different Italian regional populations) differences that emerged in Chestnut Hill.

To articulate how the Friulani established a different identity, one distinct from both the Anglo and the other Italians on the Hill, requires an articulation of the multilocal and multivocal dimensions of place. As Rodman (1992: 647) indicates, one landscape "shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users. This is more accurately a multivocal dimension of place, but multilocality conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently." We shall see how this multilocality and multivocality played out in Chestnut Hill.

Although the literature on place is voluminous, intersecting ethnicity and place is still an understudied area. Recently in Italian American studies, more scholarship has appeared analyzing the interplay of ethnicity, space, and place, although it concentrates primarily on the contemporary landscape. This paper contributes to that growing pool from an ethnohistorical perspective. In general, it is more difficult to look at communities ethnohistorically using a spatial lens. This is due to dual forces (post–World War II urban America's exodus to the suburbs and deindustrialization) that often resulted in a built environment that was decaying and eventually erased. Now decades later, with the landscape devoid of what had existed and the people who had once lived there dispersed, reading the landscape that once was becomes a very difficult endeavor indeed.

As noted previously, although the Italian community was small in Chestnut Hill, because of the good state of preservation of the built environment and because Italians are still living and working in the neighborhood or nearby, there is a unique opportunity to explore ethnicity and difference through the lens of place. This chapter contributes new ground to the emerging discourse of the dynamic interplay of memory, ethnicity, and place, and specifically to place scholarship in Italian American studies.

Scholars have used the term campanilismo (within sound of the church bell) to characterize the regionalism of early Italian immigrant urban enclaves. Campanilismo resulted in an early settlement pattern in which the chain migration of networks of townspeople and kin tended to live near one another, resulting in the classic "Little Italies" found in large cities such as New York and South Philadelphia (Yans-McLaughlin 1982; Juliani 1971: 222–223). These enclaves were never totally insular but often had a mix of other ethnicities within the neighborhood. While some attention has been paid to looking at interethnic relationships, very little research analyzes intra-ethnic relationships (among Italians of different regions) on a micro level. Because of the unique situation of northern and southern Italians in Chestnut Hill living in close proximity and the unique state of the preserved landscape, we are afforded such an opportunity.

Methodology

The interpretations in this paper are a result of an ethnohistorical project to research the Italians in Northwest Philadelphia that was funded by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. Primary source material included oral interviews, family correspondence, census records, and archival documents. Between 1997 and 2002, seventeen tape-recorded open-ended ethnographic oral interviews were conducted with first- and second-generation Italian Americans from ten different families who had once been or were still part of the immigrant
communities in the Germantown and Chestnut Hill neighborhoods of Philadelphia. Follow-up interviews were conducted in eight out of the ten families. Each interview was conducted at the interviewee's home and lasted from two to four hours. Questions concerned immigration, settlement, economic and work life, religious and family life, and ethnic relations. Interviewees were selected based on advice from the Italian American Advisory Committee that was formed for the project and followed three criteria: (1) they were immigrants themselves and therefore could speak from a first-generation perspective; (2) they or their immigrant families were members who played key roles in the community; (3) a balance was attempted to select interviewees who represented different structural categories as to gender, education, and economic status.

Immigration and Settlement in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and the Northwest

In order to better understand the production of locality in Chestnut Hill, it is necessary to contextualize the history of Italians within the larger story of immigration and in particular to Philadelphia and its northwest neighborhoods. Scholars of Italian immigration and ethnicity have focused largely on the dense enclaves in urban areas. Since South Philadelphia was the earliest and largest Italian core settlement, the majority of research is focused there. Richard Juliani's (1971, 1998, 2007) work on Philadelphia has carefully documented the South Philadelphia community from its beginnings through the period of mass immigration while noting how and why immigrants settled in other neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs. Caroline Golab's (1977) research on immigrants in Philadelphia, while primarily concentrating on the Poles in Philadelphia, also discussed the Italians. She underlined the centrality of work opportunity to immigrant destinations and underscored the importance of neighborhoods in emergent work and settlement patterns.

Because the state of Pennsylvania played a key role in the transformation of an agrarian nation to an industrial one with an emphasis on the heavy industries of coal, iron, steel, and rail, as well as cement and glass, it was a huge draw for the new immigrants looking for jobs in the late nineteenth century. By 1890, so many Italians headed to Pennsylvania that their population in the state was the second highest in the country, surpassed only by New York State. It would remain so until 1960 when the numbers of Italian immigrants in Pennsylvania dropped to third, behind New York and New Jersey (Golab 1977: 34).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the city of Philadelphia ranked near the top of large cities in terms of manufacturing. Philadelphia was uncharacteristic because it offered a larger array of manufacturing jobs than other cities, which meant greater opportunity for new immigrants. This factor in turn contributed to the establishment of larger and more stable working-class neighborhoods than in most cities (Davis 1973: 7-9). Even so, although immigrants found Philadelphia attractive, it attracted fewer proportionally than other large American cities. Between 1870 and 1920, the percentage of foreign-born in Philadelphia was lower than any other large northern city in the United States (Golab 1973: 203).

In spite of these overall state statistics, in terms of demographic trends, Philadelphia has always had one of the largest numbers of those identifying as Italian of any American city. According to the 1990 census, with 497,721, Philadelphia ranked second only to New York City in the number of people identifying as Italian American. Interestingly, in 1870, the ranking was the same as 1990 with Philadelphia second to New York City with 516 Italian-born residents. During the mass immigration period of 1890, Philadelphia's Italian-born population had risen to 6,799. By 1910, it was 45,308 and was almost 12 percent of the foreign-born population, the fourth largest in the city (U.S. Census, cited in Golab 1973).

In the popular imagination, it is South Philadelphia that is thought of as the city's Little Italy, and it had clear boundaries with a well-developed economic, political, and religious infrastructure. The early community was large enough that by the mid-nineteenth century, it warranted its own parish. The first Italian nationality parish in the United States, Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, was founded there in 1852 (Juliani 1998: 163). The earlier arrivals to Philadelphia were primarily from the northern regions of Italy, while the increasing numbers who arrived by the 1880s were from southern Italy and Sicily.

Drawn by work and kin networks, Italians began forming communities in other neighborhoods of the city and the surrounding suburbs (Juliani 1973: 237). Using church records to document that settlement, Juliani (1971: 122) showed that between 1907 and 1932, twenty-three Italian national parishes were founded in the Philadelphia archdiocese. Instigated by the Italian community, Holy Rosary was established as a nationality parish in 1914, but they were large enough to require their own ministry as early as 1894. In that year, a chapel for the Italians was created in the basement of St. Vincent's Seminary at 500 East Chelten Avenue. According to interviews with the second generation, many immigrants did not feel welcomed by the Irish Catholics and wanted a church of their own. In the smaller Italian community of Chestnut Hill, Catholics were mandated by the archdiocese to belong to Holy Rosary in Germantown. Because of proximity, however, many attended Our Mother of Consolation in upper Chestnut Hill, even though older second generation Italians told me their families had not felt welcomed by the Irish congregation.

Italian immigrants intentionally came to Philadelphia, but those arriving in the city directly from the port of entry arrived by train from New York. This was due to the fact that by the period of mass migration, the steamship not the sailing ship was the major mode of transport, and the major port of entry for
had traveled to Egypt to find work building roads. He returned to Poffabro and work. Some of the immigrants moved to several different locations and back again in search of work. Such circumstances often required migration and kin systems, pre-migration skills, and personal preferences influencing where they settled and worked. By Italian social standards, these and other manual labor positions were considered undesirable paid labor jobs, and most intended to move to artisanal trades (baker, plasterer, barber, or tailor) or to become a merchant or businessman, occupations they saw as more prestigious.

As has been noted, the economic expansion in the city at the time made it easy to acquire a job. The majority found their first jobs as track laborers for the railroads—so many in fact, that the immigrants replaced the Irish as the primary railroad gang. Germantown was one of the destinations that drew them because the Reading and the Pennsylvania railroad companies had large yards there (Juli 1973: 243-244). Oral history accounts mark the 500 block of East Rittenhouse as the first location Italians settled in Germantown, perhaps as early as the mid-1870s. It was here that the first seven men, who according to oral tradition were the first immigrants to Germantown, lived. Mary D'Agostino Nocella, who grew up in Italian Germantown, noted in her family history that East Rittenhouse, a dead end street, bordered by a coal yard at one end and cut off by railroad tracks at the other, could never be considered a prime residential area, but it was the area denoted for the Italians. These working-class homes had been built along Haines and Rittenhouse Streets to accommodate the new workers who were attracted there by the spinning mills and other factories that had sprung up from Chelten Avenue to Chew Streets during the Civil War.

As has been documented by other scholars, the situation differed somewhat from city to city, but in general, the padrone system, local political bosses, chain migration and kin systems, pre-migration skills, and personal preferences influenced where Italians moved and worked. Such circumstances often required immigrants to move to several different locations and back again in search of work. Some of the immigrants moved to the West Virginia and Pennsylvania coal fields and even to the far western states before settling in Northwest Philadelphia. For instance, unable to find construction work in Poffabro in Friuli, two brothers, Charles (Carlo) and Gus (Agostino) Lorenzon, first came to Philadelphia in 1896 in search of work. Unsuccessful in finding any employment in Philadelphia, they traveled west to Silverado, Colorado, where they worked in the silver mines. Before choosing the United States as a destination, one of these brothers had traveled to Egypt to find work building roads. He returned to Poffabro and then left for the United States. Between 1896 and 1902, Charles and Gus returned at least once to Poffabro and then in 1902 settled permanently in Chestnut Hill (Lorenzon 2002a: 21).

Most Italians thought of railroad and construction work as temporary until something better could be found. By Italian social standards, these and other manual labor positions were considered undesirable paid labor jobs, and most intended to move to artisanal trades (baker, plasterer, barber, or tailor) or to become a merchant or businessman, occupations they saw as more prestigious.

In the early boom years in Philadelphia, the switch from unskilled laborer to a more prestigious position was not difficult because jobs were plentiful in large as well as smaller specialized industries. After World War I and the increase in the Italian population in the city, Italians worked in a variety of workplaces including cigar factories, theaters, restaurants, milk companies, food importing, barber shops, bakeries, banks, insurance firms, streetcar manufacturing, grocery stores, and the government (Juli 1973: 244-245). As the Italian population grew, the ethnic community could support an expanding infrastructure of merchants and other small businessmen to meet its needs. The Italian community in Germantown, much larger than the one in Chestnut Hill, had its own social and economic infrastructure well in place by the 1930s. Italians owned numerous grocery stores, bakeries, barber shops, other specialty shops, and a funeral home.

Although the Italian ideal was for women to remain at home, economic realities did not necessarily allow it. Women and children in the Northwest found work in cooking and catering or in the large textile mills, such as Dobson that was located in the East Falls neighborhood. In 1907 at age nine John Fusaro arrived in Germantown with his mother and sister after his father's untimely death in Italy. They came to join his mother's sister and brother-in-law who took them in since the family was destitute. At age fourteen, he began working in the Dobson "spinning mill" located on Wistar Street, joining his mother who was already employed there (Fusaro 1999). Friulan women in Chestnut Hill cleaned houses and did laundry for the wealthy on the Hill (Houseal 2000: 26-27). Due to southern Italian social mores, those women did not go into other people's homes to do such work.

Italians were also arriving in the Delaware Valley to work in the stone quarries, including those in Germantown and Chestnut Hill. The quarries were active places providing the stone for the rapidly developing neighborhoods of Northwest Philadelphia. Contractors and speculators were buying land and building homes for the middle class and wealthy who wanted to take advantage of the newly popularized suburban style of living while still being able to commute to jobs in Center City. Many Italians who immigrated were skilled stonemasons and tile setters who easily found work in the building trades.
Maximilian Roman, who encouraged his fellow townspeople to emigrate from Poffabro to Chestnut Hill, may have been a padrone. A padrone was a labor agent who enlisted prospective workers. In the earliest years of Italian immigration, before people had family networks to help them, padroni helped new immigrants get a foothold and guided them through the initial settlement process. The padrone usually charged a fee for the services he performed including providing the fare for the voyage and locating housing. Such agents were very active among construction and railroad workers (Gabaccia 1984: 61–65; 1988: 114–115; Lopreato 1970: 93–95).

Oral documentation indicates that others who arrived in the Northwest also seem to have been recruited from their home villages for the building trades. According to an interview with Jane DeNola (1998), her grandfather Anthony D’Lauro and great-uncle John D’Lauro, both skilled stonemasons, were recruited from Italy in the early 1900s by George Woodward, the son-in-law of Henry Houston, to work for his development company, which was responsible for much of the new construction on the Hill. According to Naomi Houseal (2000: 24), the southern Italians worked for George Woodward but the Friulans did not.

A pattern of finding work illustrates the paesani relationship of employment that was common. This occurred when immigrants introduced new arrivals, fellow townspeople or family members, to their employers, thus conveniently providing workers for the growing needs of particular industries (Juliani 1973: 247). Francesco Giorno, arriving from Calabria, found work building the wall around the Grey Towers estate (now Arcadia University), putting his stonemasonry training to good use. Like the Giornos, the Iannuzzis were also stonemasons coming from Luzzi, in the province of Cosenza in Calabria, as were many who settled in Germantown. An excerpt from a family letter demonstrates clearly how a family connection worked well for the Iannuzzis:

My father [Francesco] and brother Vincenzo were master stonemasons and they worked together with a building contractor. My father later had to retire because he had asthma and couldn’t work anymore. My brother Gennarino [diminutive for Gennaro] was a pottery maker by trade. But since pottery jobs were not available at that time, through my brother Vincenzo, Gennarino was hired by the same contractor as a stone mason apprentice. He soon learned the trade and they both worked steady together.

Oftentimes, those who were both skilled and literate could more easily move to supervisory positions. That was the case for Luigi Mercaldo, a stonemason who had come from the city of Naples about 1898. Employed by a local developer, he soon rose to the level of foreman supervising other Italian laborers. Mercaldo completed the stonework for the Cresheim Valley Fountain at the intersection of Cresheim Valley Road and Germantown Avenue. The Friulans who immigrated to Chestnut Hill were particularly successful in establishing tile businesses and quarries. For example, Marcolina Brothers, in business since the late 1800s, and Philadelphia Tile became well known businesses and engaged work throughout the region. Pete Marcolina (Fleeson 1995: E10) estimated that more than half of the stone houses in Chestnut Hill were built by his family’s business, much of it subcontracted by George Woodward. These ranged from smaller twins and quadruples to mansions in the area, including the former Albert M. Greenfield estate. According to Pat Staffieri, whose parents emigrated from Molise in southern Italy and settled in Chestnut Hill, it was also Italians who laid the streets in Chestnut Hill with Belgian block. Those blocks can still be seen at the intersection of Cresheim Valley Drive and Germantown Avenue (Saverino 2000a: 51–52).

Chestnut Hill and the Spatialization of the Socioeconomic Landscape

In Chestnut Hill, the detailed archival work of identifying the Italian immigrants and verifying the exact number who came in the early years remains to be done. Nevertheless, oral history accounts and archival and secondary sources confirm that a small group of southern Italians, primarily from Calabria and Sicily, and a larger community of Friulans from several small villages (including Poffabro, Maniago, and Frisanco), many of whom were connected by kin networks, settled in Chestnut Hill. Oral interviews show that chain migration continued to draw more Friulans newcomers into the early decades of the twentieth century and the neighborhood received an infusion of new immigrants again after World War II. As we shall discover, it was the Friulans, having arrived as skilled stone carvers and tile setters, who are primarily responsible for transforming the built environment still extant on the Hill today.

When the Italians arrived, they encountered a village atmosphere with a distinct social hierarchy. Since the eighteenth century, Chestnut Hill’s main thoroughfare, now known as Germantown Avenue, lined with houses, shops, and stores, operated as a gateway to Philadelphia proper. The Hill developed early economic bonds with Philadelphia; nonetheless, it maintained an autonomous village identity that continued even after its annexation by the city in the mid-nineteenth century (Contosta 1992: 9–13). Chestnut Hill’s development accelerated when it burgeoned as a commuter suburb for the wealthy after the first railroad line was built connecting it to the city in 1854. This wealthy stratum were the social elite of the city who built large summer homes in upper east Chestnut Hill, which was located literally at the top of the Hill.
By 1873, industrialist and philanthropist Henry Howard Houston purchased most of the acreage in west Chestnut Hill, and by 1884, he began building the development of St. Martins in southwestern Chestnut Hill. Houston designed St. Martins as a residential development with distinct geographical and social boundaries. The development's design insured its suitability for Houston’s own family's social stature, and in 1886, he relocated his family from Germantown to a fifty-two-acre estate within St. Martins (Sies 1987: 272–274). Although Houston sold the larger single homes he built in the development, he rented most houses he built to upper-middle-class and professional tenants, effectively retaining control over both the land use and its occupants (Contosta 1992: 94–98).

After Henry Howard Houston’s death in 1895, George Woodward, Houston’s son-in-law, resumed Houston’s suburban development. Woodward was a prominent figure in the Progressive movement, and one of his primary endeavors in Philadelphia was an interest in environmental reform and a goal of making decent housing available for everyone (Sies 1987: 279). While these were his espoused ideals, practice often played out differently.

For instance, between 1909 and 1912, Woodward built new houses in east Chestnut Hill (the Benezet Street project) in his first large real estate venture. Woodward stated in his memoir that he intended to rent this housing to working class families but “when the white collar crowd came along and rented every house in sight,” he allowed it to happen although he could have reserved them for the intended group. “They were exactly the people,” he wrote, “who pay their bills, and seldom complain” (Contosta 1992: 104, 106). Thus, we see how, through self selection and development design, that within the Anglo population itself, a hierarchy existed that was articulated spatially.

By the mid-1880s, large numbers of laborers were required to support the building boom in Chestnut Hill spurred by Houston and others. It was the labor of these workers that built and supported the neighborhood’s economic infrastructure. The workers on the Hill were keenly aware of the Anglo social structure that existed, and mockingly called the middle-class Anglos “half-cuts” ostensibly referring to their “wanna be” status.

The Anglo wealthy maintained both social and physical distance from those they employed. All the working classes, including immigrant workers, were relegated to living in the lower half of the Hill, in designated housing located on both the east and west sides of the main avenue that bisected the village. Those who controlled the neighborhood attempted, in Foucault’s sense, to enclose and organize individuals within it (Low 1999b: 113). Since humans tend to resist constraints imposed upon them, we shall see how the elite were not as complete or as successful as they hoped to be.

First, let us situate the southern Italians and the Friulani within Chestnut Hill. By the late nineteenth century when the Italians arrived in Chestnut Hill, they joined the few African Americans and numerous Irish immigrants who were already in service to the Anglo wealthy who controlled the Hill’s social and economic life. A social hierarchy segregated by class, ethnicity, and color became clearly mapped in space.

As Gabaccia (2006: 10) points out, Italo-phobia took on particular nuance in English-speaking countries. In the United States by the late nineteenth century, nativist and anti-Catholic sentiment and the association of Italians with racial inferiority caused Italian neighborhoods to be foregrounded in ways that other immigrant settlements were not. After 1899, when Italians came through Ellis Island, northern and southern Italians were identified as different races (Gabaccia 2006: 21). “Little Italies” were stigmatized places. Finding themselves in a social climate that ranged from outright discrimination to at best one of tolerance, and separated from Americans by language issues, Italians reacted with their own insularity. They created a web of community based in the network of extended families and friends that helped to ease the adjustment to life in the United States (Saverino 2003: 10). Juliani (1971: 185–187) has shown the early neighborhood boundaries for South Philadelphia and the inter-ethnic tensions that existed. Many Germantown Italians discussed the discrimination they experienced particularly between the Irish and the Italians. John Fusaro (1999: tape 2, 14) told me, “We weren’t accepted very well. No. Not for a while. As I say, they used to call us Guineas and Wop.”

Tensions were often demarcated by clear spatial boundaries which at first were not crossed in terms of living space, but that changed over time. In South Philadelphia, Italians began moving into what had been largely Jewish, Irish, and German areas by World War I (Juliani 1971: 186). During the decades characterized by discrimination against the racialized Other, Italians in Germantown and Chestnut Hill were subjected to the informal barriers that could be imposed, such as refusal by some to rent or sell property to them. The spatial boundaries were neither impermeable nor permanent and as soon as they could acquire property, Italians challenged the spatial ordering, sometimes through resistance or subversion. For instance, Joseph Galante, a southern Italian, recalled that in 1917, three years after his family immigrated to Chestnut Hill, they resorted to using straw people to purchase a house on a street that had no other Italians (33 West Springfield Avenue) because the sellers refused to sell to Italians (Galante 1985: 3).

Philadelphia was a city that had some structural factors in place that facilitated the transition from renter to property ownership. Small, well-built single family homes were part of the city’s early design. Also, William Penn’s establishment of a land rent contractual system that was unique to Pennsylvania enabled a working-class family to invest in a home. Between 1890 and 1930, home ownership in Philadelphia increased from 22.8 percent (a low rate compared to other cities) to 51.8 percent in 1930, the highest among the fourteen largest
cities in the United States. While some national characteristics accounted for this rise, a dramatic increase in the number of building and loan associations and their borrowing policies were crucial factors in Philadelphia (Juliani 1973: 248–249). By 1920, Germantown Italians had their own Building and Loan Association with 800 shareholders becoming one of thirty-three such associations in Germantown.

While the example of the Galante family illustrates the intergroup tensions that existed between Anglos and Italian immigrants, intragroup relationships between southern Italians (primarily Calabrians) and the Friulani played out in ways that can also be mapped spatially.

Although Chestnut Hill did not have a large settlement of Italians when compared with neighborhoods such as South Philadelphia, nonetheless, two distinct Italian populations segregated in space evolved. Once again, the extent of built environment allows us to trace this self-segregation between the Friulani and the southern Italians, and oral accounts provide interpretive clues about the nature of their relationship.

While southern Italians, such as the Galantes, were for the most part purchasing and adapting homes to their tastes, the Friulani built their own homes, thus attaining the ultimate Italian ideal. Also, several Friulani families who were successful contractors built commercial buildings that they rented. The Venetian Club, originally formed in 1924, was relocated from a small baracca built in a quarry off Cheltenham Avenue to Germantown Avenue when the Friulani purchased a former school and built a three-story addition onto it themselves in 1929. Within about a thirty-year span of arrival, the Friulani had mapped physically a distinct identity and aesthetic in the lower part of the Hill.

The Friulani, unlike most southern Italians, had access to a structure of opportunity that allowed some families in particular to gain a firm economic foothold. Given the marginalization of Italians that occurred generally during this period, the relative speed of the Friulani's economic success is all the more surprising. Several factors contributed to this structure of opportunity. The Friulani tended to be highly skilled in stonework and tile setting having been trained in Italy before emigrating. Stone carving and tile setting were trades that were much in demand in the construction business in Philadelphia. While families told me stories of workers walking to worksites on the Main Line, because they could not or did not want to pay the transportation fare, whenever they could workers also found employment on the Hill. Early on, the Friulani used their skills as leverage to move up the economic ladder by establishing their own construction and tile-setting businesses, filling positions in their companies with other immigrants. They hired other Friulani but also southern Italians.

Secondly, because the Friulani had come in such large numbers from Pofabro and surrounding villages, many social networks from the towns that existed prior to immigration were reestablished in Chestnut Hill. This common pattern of chain migration provided new immigrants with an instantaneous network of connections for jobs, housing, and socializing. Anthony Filippi noted, "We had friends here and they came to the house, my father's friends, and they took us under their wing and we had no problems at all. The only problem was learning the language" (Filippi 1985: 6). At another point Filippi commented on the social ties: "We are pretty close knit. There are a lot of relationships too. Even with second and third cousins, there are friendships and relationships. We came from the same town more or less and there had to be a pretty close relationship on the whole."

Two other factors helped the Friulani achieve economic success. The first was that the Friulani tended to have a much higher literacy rate than southern Italians upon arrival. This skill has many obvious advantages and puts such immigrants immediately in the position of serving as ethnic brokers. We know it generally to be true that those who came from the middle class in Italy, or who were better educated or more Americanized than the majority of working-class Italians, often acted as middlemen or "ethnic brokers" between Italians and the dominant society (Di Leonardo 1984: 156). Those who emerged as leaders in the ethnic community became spokespersons for the rest who had no public voice.

Also, the Friulani tended to have lighter skin and hair than their southern Italian counterparts. Some anglicized their names and so, with an appearance that looked more Nordic than stereotypically Italian, they could effectively pass and did. With some decision, one southern Italian I interviewed named a Friulani family whom he knew from school days. They had changed their surname and did not self-identify as Italian at all.

At the height of the immigration period, Italian identity in the United States was a southern Italian one. As has been noted, the idea that southern Italians were racially inferior and prone to criminal behavior was prevalent in the popular imagination in the United States (Messina 2004). Anti-Italian sentiment, often resulting in discrimination, was not unique to Philadelphia but was part of an emergent "ideology of immigration," a widespread xenophobia in the United States that could be felt as the tide of new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe grew larger (Juliani 1998: 315–316). The sheer number of Italians who arrived—people who in appearance, religion, political attitudes, educational standards, behavior, and language were unlike the immigrant groups who had preceded them—fueled fears and prejudice. The nativist attitude against Italians manifested itself both covertly and overtly. Tactics ranging from intimidation to deeds forbidding the sale of property were used in an attempt to keep Italians within the boundaries of "their" neighborhood. Obviously, the Friulani would have an advantage if they could distance themselves from being associated with the negative moniker of "Italian."
Indeed, the Friulani arrived with their own prejudices that existed in northern Italy about southern Italians. Therefore the negative connotations about southern Italians that the Friulani encountered in this country only served to further embed beliefs they already held. In part, this can be explained by referring to Italy's political history. When the immigrants first set foot in the United States, they thought of themselves as natives of the particular town or village from which they hailed, rather than as Italians. Italy itself had been united only since 1861, but more importantly, the government was controlled by northerners, whom the southerners shared few values or beliefs. Long after unification, Italy remained a country characterized by regional differences. With no sense of an Italian national identity and not yet thinking of themselves as Americans, Italian immigrants, coming from diverse regions and backgrounds, had no uniform, shared past. In a sense, they were a people without history, cut off from the villages they had left, speaking languages so different that a Calabrian could not understand a Sicilian, and living in a new place where they faced an uncertain future.25

One example illustrates how the Friulani characterized themselves in contrast to southern Italians. One Friulani told me that they referred to southern Italians as coming from bassa [lower] Italy, and they referred to themselves as “brown gravy” Italians because their staple foods were butter and polenta. She said that her grandmother had never seen pasta or red sauce until she met southern Italians who cooked it (Houseal 2000). She commented that “the Friulani weren’t snobbish” but that they socialized among themselves (Saverino 2000b: 8). Clearly, it was a separate identity that they cultivated.

We will take a closer look at the Lorezon family, which was mentioned earlier. By looking at one family’s history, we can situate it within the neighborhood economy and the Friulani community. According to Herbert Lorenzon (2002a, 2002b), son of the immigrant Emilio, by 1906 six Lorenzon siblings, their mother, and an uncle had emigrated from Pofabro and settled in Chestnut Hill. The father, a landowner, had died in 1904. Almost immediately upon arrival, they began building a house for themselves. Trained as stone masons and builders, they had worked alongside their father, and by 1898, had built a five-story stone house in their village. They quarried the stone, cut the trees that they used for the wood trim, and even made the tools used in its construction. The father’s brother, a cabinetmaker, designed and built furniture for the Pofabro house. By 1914, they had formed their own contracting business incorporating as the Lorenzon Brothers Company. They did not know how to get customers in the early stages of the business, so they would simply bid on subcontracts for the stone work. They soon developed a reputation with several well-known architects who were designing large estates. By the mid-1920s, they were reaping the rewards of the American dream. They had purchased cars and built their own architect designed-homes as well as commercial and apartment buildings that they rented.

Transforming the Landscape

Because of such advantages in opportunity, the Friulani, were able to effectively establish a hierarchy of their own in stone. I am offering an analysis of the social production of space, that is, the material aspects of the environment, as divided into three categories on the Hill. First, are the designs that the Friulani were hired, generally as subcontractors, to build. These include public buildings, private residences, and smaller structures.

Some of these buildings, such as the public library and the Presbyterian church, are landmarks on the Hill. Others were large estate houses designed by nationally renowned architects such as Robert McGoodwin, with whom the Friulani developed relationships. This category of building realizes the aesthetic tastes of the Anglo community but demonstrates the technical skill of the immigrants. Their contribution in this realm is virtually undocumented but it lives on in the collective memory of the Friulani community and in the memories of the families who did the work.

It is in the realm of the buildings that they built for themselves and the transformation of the land itself that the innermost desires and emotions of the Friulani are played out. Although the gardens and landscaping have for the most part disappeared, the buildings remain. They built commercial structures that line the lower part of Germantown Avenue and homes that radiate from either side of it onto the neighborhood streets defining the lower half of Chestnut Hill. Their own construction allowed expression of cultural values and aesthetic tastes in a way that mere adaptation did not. The houses they constructed were often a curious hybridization of contemporary American tastes and old world cultural values and aesthetic ideals.

The most successful Friulani built substantial middle-class single homes on the lower east side of Chestnut Hill.27 Emil Lorezon's house (see Figure 3.2) was built in 1926. He served as his own contractor and hired the well-known architect H. Louis Duhring to design his two and one-half story house. Its design, a classic center hall colonial, is in keeping with contemporary American tastes of the period, but if closely surveyed, certain features indicate the skills and values of Italian craftsmanship. Although the tile roof is not uncommon to the workers’ fine skills. The gargoyle on the front porch, the arches on the sun porch, are elements that reflect the owner's aesthetic.

By the mid-1920s, many families were beginning to live the American dream if on a lesser scale than the Lorenzon family. Although most Italian immigrants could not afford to build a home of the grand nature of the Lorenzon house, their modest homes are hybridizations on a more moderate scale.
FIGURE 3.2 Built in 1926, Emil Lorenzon served as his own contractor but hired architect H. Louis Duhring to design this stone classic center hall colonial that features Italian aesthetic ideals and craftsmanship. (Photograph courtesy of Herbert Lorenzon.)

Some adopted the twin housing construction, so typical of Philadelphia, and a more economical way to build than a free-standing single structure. Frugality and practicality had been a way of life in Italy. Immigrants Alberiglio Roman, a carpenter, and Sante Marcolina, a tile setter, are one example of Friulani friends who cooperated to build a house together on East Moreland Avenue (Roman 2002: 1–2, 4, 8). They built a two and one-half story stucco over concrete block dwelling because it was cheaper than brick or stone (see Figure 3.3). They moved there in 1929, but it took Roman until 1942 to finish the house, reflecting the family’s financial capabilities during the Depression Era (Roman 2002: 2–3, 11).

Many of the buildings, both commercial and residential, incorporate architectural and decorative elements that mark them as Italian built and owned. Two of the most common are the arch and balcony. While the arch is a neoclassical feature not uncommon in contemporary buildings of the period, in Chestnut Hill it seems to be used almost exclusively by Italian builders. An apartment building, built in 1925 by the Lorenzon brothers, memorializes their own name in stone on its cornice and incorporates wrought iron balconies and an arch at the peak of the roof.  

Several Friulani established tile setting businesses. The Philadelphia Tile Company, owned by Friulani immigrants, was located on Germantown Avenue (7904–7906). Still extant, one can view through the exterior window examples of the tile work from which customers could choose. (See Figure 3.4.)

FIGURE 3.3 Alberiglio Roman and Sante Marcolina built these twin homes of stucco over concrete block in 1929. (Photograph by Joan Saverino.)

FIGURE 3.4 Multicolored tile detail from the former showroom of The Philadelphia Tile Company, located at 7904–7906 Germantown Avenue. (Photograph by Joan Saverino.)
The Roanoke Garage was built in 1922 by Antonio Roman from Poffabro. He spelled out the name of his garage in a decorative brick design. In the Marcolina/Roman twin mentioned previously, Sante Marcolina used his tile-setting expertise to pave his front porch in tile. Tile setters' work still embellishes exteriors, entrances, and foyers throughout the neighborhood.

These embellishments are sometimes small and are often hidden, but within the Friulani community they are valued and regarded as elements of beauty. They identify the Friulani to themselves and the nooks and crannies and objects resonate with stories of the past; yet they are probably unnoticed and unknown by outsiders. They certainly had been to me until their location and significance were revealed to me as I got to know people.

When I interviewed Gisella Roman, Alberiglio's widow, she brought me onto her front porch to show me Sante's adjacent tiled front porch. She relayed to me how, when the children were small, she and her neighbor would fill the porch, which had cement sides, with water and allow the children to use it as a shallow pool. Another widow told me how her husband, a tile setter, had made large planters for her and decorated them in tile. She had them filled with flowers in her front garden and had them there for years. A few years ago someone stole the planters. In retelling the story, the distress she still felt at recalling the incident was palpable. A middle-aged granddaughter told me where her grandfather's tile setting business office had been. The building was extant but it had been transformed into an upscale antique shop complete with a weathervane on the roof. The owners of the shop had not appreciated the original front of the building which had been covered in the tile that the family sold—as a sort of advertisement of their trade—and so the current owners had plastered over and painted it blue. So even as the stories remain, some of the physical landmarks are erased.

The Venetian Social Club was the largest and most important monument the Friulani built. The Club is the central symbolic location of the community's collective dual identity as Chestnut Hillers and Friulani. This building situates the identity of the Friulani to themselves, intra-ethnically with the southern Italians, and in relationship to the larger Anglo community.

The Venetian Club was officially founded in 1924 when it purchased a school building that was located on Germantown Avenue. In 1929, to accommodate increased membership, members raised funds and constructed a three-story addition onto the front of the original building. The members completed much of the interior and exterior decorative work themselves. The craftsmen's aesthetic tastes are reflected in the brick addition with its stone ground floor, center arched two-story stone entrance with terrazzo floor, stone lintels and sills, tile roof, and the stone caps with a winged lion sculpture, the mascot of Venice, at the top.

By crowning the stately façade with the symbol of the Venetian republic, the Friulani aligned with a Renaissance past. Such a move was not uncommon by Italian immigrants of the period who wished to publicly distance themselves from their peasant past. By positioning the Club on the main thoroughfare, they symbolically laid claim to the realm of Anglo public space. Because they all lived on nearby streets, they walked to and from the Club regularly. Through this very act of routinization, they created and normalized the paths from house to Club, marking them as Friulani. On warm nights when a band played and the windows were open, the noise that emanated from the Club extended ownership of space to the surrounding street.

The Club was the one central gathering place for the entire Friulani community where they could reinforce local ties and maintain and renew memories of their beloved Val Colvera, the Colvera Valley. While the card room was a sacred area for the men, multigenerational families used the bowling alleys, game room, and lounge.

Privately, in the interior of the Club, they ate polenta and brown gravy, spoke Friulani, and sang and danced to Friulani music. Through acting, speaking, and remembering, they engaged in a group dynamic that engendered and reinforced cohesiveness intergenerationally. Such social behaviors renewed their feelings of what it meant to be Friulani in Italy and connoted a new Friulani identity situated in Anglo Chestnut Hill. One member remarked on how the second generation grew up at the Club: "That was the hubub. The life was the Venetian Club" (Houséal 2000: 13). These second-generation Friulani wax nostalgic when they recall the weekly socializing. This is how cultural values and memories were passed on in the effortless way that enculturation occurs. These acts, highly symbolic, also reinforced a difference in feeling from the Anglos who never fully accepted them and the southern Italians with whom they felt little affinity and from whom they wished to distance themselves.

The impact of the Friulani on this urban neighborhood is not recognized or even known by most residents of Chestnut Hill. But for the Friulani themselves, although many no longer live on the Hill, a remembrance of their past is inscribed and constituted in the landscape. The production of the local that once was lives on in memory now and is re-enacted on special occasions at the Venetian Club, an evocative imagined landscape merging two stone villages, one of many-colored Dolomia and another of mica-flecked Wissahickon schist.

Notes

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1. It is now the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region.

2. Chestnut Hill has been designated a National Historic District, ensuring its unique state of physical preservation.

3. See Web site by Bruce B. Janz, “Research on Place and Space,” at http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/place/placesense.htm, for a good overview of the history of place studies and pertinent bibliographies from anthropological, historical, and other disciplinary perspectives. Sociologist Jerome Krase (2006: 80) has called the transformation of place and the changed meanings that result “spatial semiotics.”


6. The research was conducted under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council project “Raising Our Sites: Community Histories of Pennsylvania” local scholar grant, 1998–2000, and the PHC visiting scholar grant, 2002–2003.


8. Interestingly, according to Golab (1977: 3–5), although the two largest cities, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, had large numbers of Italians, 71 percent of the Italians who immigrated to Pennsylvania settled in midsize and smaller industrial towns scattered throughout the state.

9. In 1870, New York had 2,793 Italians. Boston was ranked third with 263 (Jullian 1998).


11. On Haines and High, streets that are north and parallel to Rittenhouse, the block equivalent is the 400 block. It is unclear why the numbering is different for Rittenhouse. According to Mary Nocella (personal communication, 20 July 2000), among the first arrivals are said to be Francesco Iannuzzi, Gennaro LaGreca, Beniamino DiTommaso, Pasquale Altomare, and Totono Amoroso. This information was relayed to her by her aunt, Margaret Cupo LaGreca, whose husband was Frank LaGreca, the son of Gennaro LaGreca, listed above. Margaret Cupo LaGreca died in 1997 in her nineties.


14. Personal communication from Herbert Lorenzon indicates the town was Silverado. A printed family history lists the town as Silverton, Colorado. It is unclear which is correct, since both towns exist and both had silver mines.

15. Dobson Mills was located at Scott’s Lane and Ridge Avenue in East Falls. In 1885, it had 1,400 looms and employed approximately 5,000 workers (Scranton and Licht 1986: 26).

16. According to Pete Marcolina, whose family was from the Friuli region, and who owned a contracting business in Chestnut Hill, there were at one time more than six quarries in the Chestnut Hill area alone (Fleeson 1995: E10).

17. Pasqualina’s letter in Vincenza Iannuzzi Cerrato file, Germantown Historical Society.

18. Mary Anne Mannino, personal communication, 27 April 1999.

19. The Greenfield Estate was then purchased by Temple University to become a conference center. It was recently purchased by Chestnut Hill College.


23. Due to the complexities of the political and economic system in Italy, the educational system in northern Italy was far more advanced than in the southern regions.

24. For more on nativism and xenophobia, see John Higham 1998.

25. Eric R. Wolf (1982: x) uses the phrase “the people without history” in reference to the common people—peasants, laborers, immigrants, minorities—who were “as much agents in the historical process as they were its victims and silent witnesses.” It is used here in a different sense, to indicate Italians who were cut off from their historical past through the process of emigration.

26. The Lorenzon siblings were Carlo, Agoostino, Emilio, Vittorio, Alberto, and Marina. Their parents were Maria and Vincenzo. The uncle who immigrated was Valentino.

27. Lorenzon Brothers continues to operate as a commercial contracting company with offices in Chestnut Hill.


29. The original owners of Philadelphia Tile were John Marcolina, Louis Roman, Angelo Rosa, and Joe Peragine (Naomi Houseal, personal communication, 1 July 2003).

30. An outsider would be anyone, including southern Italians, who were not Friulani.

31. See Low 1999a, 8, for use of the term “white public space.”

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