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The Enduring Community: The Jews of Newark and MetroWest

William B. Helmreich

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From its founding in the late seventeenth century, Newark, New Jersey, was a vibrant and representative center of Jewish life in America. Geographically and culturally situated between New York City and its outlying suburbs, Newark afforded Jewish residents the advantages of a close-knit community along with the cultural abundance and social dynamism of urban life. In Newark, all of the representative stages of modern Jewish experience were enacted, from immigration and acculturation to upward mobility and community building. *The Enduring Community* is a lively and evocative social history of the Jewish presence in Newark as well as an examination of what Newark tells us about social assimilation, conflict and change.

Grounded in documentary research, the volume makes extensive use of interviews and oral histories. The author traces the growth of the Jewish population in the pre-Revolutionary period to its settlement of German Jews in the 1840s and Eastern European Jews in the 1880s. Helmreich delineates areas of contention and cooperation between these groups and relates how an American identity was eventually forged within the larger ethnic mix of the city. Jewish population in politics, the establishment of Jewish schools, synagogues, labor unions, charities, and community groups are described together with cultural and recreational life. Despite the formal and emotional bonds that formed over a century, Jewish neighborhoods in Newark did not survive the postwar era. The trek to the suburbs, the erosion of Newark's tax base, and deteriorating services accelerated a movement outward that mirrored the demographic patterns of cities across America. By the time of the Newark riots in 1967, the Jewish presence was largely absent.

This volume reclaims a lost history and gives personalized voice to the dreams, aspirations, and memories of a dispersed community. It demonstrates how former Newarkers built new Jewish communities in the surrounding suburbs, an area dubbed "MetroWest" by Jewish leaders. *The Enduring Community* is must reading for students of Jewish social history, sociologists, urban studies specialists, and readers interested in the history of New Jersey. The book includes archival photographs form the periods discussed.

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