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Article Summary: The Industrial Removal Office, founded in New York City in 1901, moved Jewish immigrants from crowded Eastern cities to communities throughout the United States. In Lincoln and Omaha, the IRO program ran on a one-to-one, personalized basis. Where a Jewish community existed, the program was able to function successfully; where there were only one or two individuals to sponsor the re-settlers, it became burdensome for both the sponsor and the immigrant. The work of the IRO helps explain to many Nebraska Jews how their family got to Nebraska.

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Photographs / Images: Omaha street scene about 1906; Douglas Street, Omaha; Harry B Zimman, IRO agent, 1907-1912; various correspondence from Brandeis & Sons and Aaron Ferer Metals; Mrs E A Schloss; Samuel N Wolbach of Grand Island; Correspondence of A B Alpirn, Scrap Iron and Metal Dealer

# THE INDUSTRIAL REMOVAL OFFICE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF JEWS IN NEBRASKA, 1901-1917

*By Carol Gendler*

The Industrial Removal Office was founded in New York City in 1901 to remove Jewish immigrants from crowded eastern cities and resettle them in communities throughout the United States.<sup>1</sup> There were a number of organizations which helped transfer Jews from Eastern Europe to the United States. The IRO, however, participated only in the resettlement of Jews who were already in this country.

Starting with the tremendous immigration from Eastern Europe in the early 1880s, Jews settled in large numbers on the lower east side of New York City and in smaller numbers in other cities on the northeastern seaboard. It was feared that the poor health conditions, overcrowding, and inadequate employment to which these refugees were subjected would result in increased anti-Semitism and immigration restrictions. In addition, the resources of the Jewish communal agencies which tried to ease the plight of these East European Jews were already overburdened.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1900 brought an influx of Romanian Jews, driven from their homeland by a resurgence of anti-Semitic restrictions. A meeting of New York community leaders in the summer

of that year resulted in a redistribution plan that was to be administered by B'nai B'rith, a fraternal organization selected because it already had a network of branches throughout the country. Leo Levi, B'nai B'rith president, directed local lodges to find employment for Romanian refugees, and indeed, many were settled in communities throughout the United States as a result of this fledgling program.<sup>3</sup>

But the task was too large for B'nai B'rith, and Romanian Jews were not the only ones in need of such assistance. In January 1901 the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, itself established only a year earlier, organized its own Industrial Removal Office.<sup>4</sup>

In time the IRO was separated from the Jewish Agricultural Society and became an independent organization "supported largely from funds derived from the Jewish Colonization Association."<sup>5</sup> David Bressler, who became IRO head in 1903, stated:

The aim of the Removal Office [was] to act as an invisible force to direct the stream of Jewish workingmen to our western country and . . . that the time may come that of the Jews who land at Ellis Island in any one year, a majority of them will voluntarily and instantly depart for the interior upon their own initiative and without outside assistance.<sup>6</sup>

Bressler was too optimistic. But a significant percentage of the Jewish population of many cities in the interior of the country originated with the IRO, and many more family members and

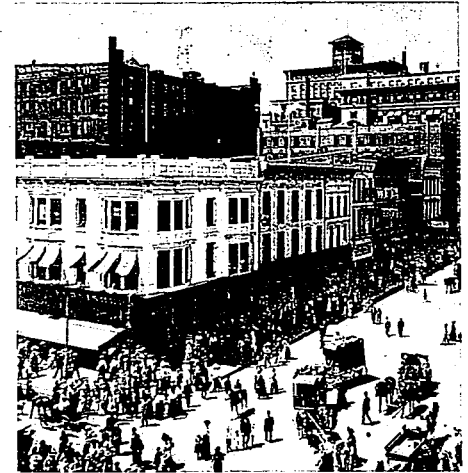
former friends and neighbors followed.<sup>7</sup>

The IRO sent agents throughout the country to organize local communities to participate in its work and to investigate the potential for employment and local assistance. It is estimated that over 2,000 individuals were resettled in more than 250 communities in the first two years of IRO activities. Records indicate that a total of 2,156 persons were settled in Nebraska between 1901 and 1917, with the greatest number arriving between 1903 and 1908. IRO statistics list twenty-three Nebraska cities and towns in which refugees were settled, but we have actual evidence of settlements in only eight communities, and in fact, all but a few of these took place in Omaha and Lincoln.<sup>8</sup>

Statistics, which are speculative at best, indicate that the Jewish population of Nebraska grew from 3,000 to 4,000 in 1900 to 5,000 in 1907 and may have reached a total of 13,500 in 1912, after which growth slowed drastically. If these figures are taken as a guideline, then the more than 2,000 immigrants settled in Nebraska by the IRO would comprise fifteen percent of the Jewish population. Assuming that family members and friends of the original IRO settlers were subsequently attracted to Nebraska, the IRO movement can be considered to have had a significant impact on these numbers.<sup>9</sup>

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*Peddlers' carts, wagons, and stands along southwest Sixteenth and Douglas streets, Omaha, about 1906. From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to Western Heritage Museum.... (above) Douglas Street in Omaha's retail district. (NSHS-054-1051)*

The role of the IRO in the settlement of Jews in Nebraska is revealed in the papers of the Industrial Removal Office, housed at the American Jewish Historical Society in Waltham, Massachusetts. The Nebraska collection comprises more than 1,600 items, consisting of correspondence between the IRO staff and the local representatives responsible for assisting the immigrants, as well as letters from immigrants themselves, from Omaha Jews seeking help in bringing friends and family, and from potential employers.<sup>10</sup>

The process of removal was a one-on-one program, a major accomplishment considering that more than 70,000 individuals were resettled in this way. Each individual applicant was sponsored by the local agent of the IRO or by a member of his family or a friend. Sometimes the IRO would provide transportation expenses if someone on the receiving end would guarantee "that the individual would not become a public charge." This theme permeates IRO correspondence — a fear

of dependence on charity. The local agent investigated each situation and advised the IRO office whether to send the individual. Sometimes the local agent advised against sending a person, if he determined that family members were able but unwilling to contribute financially. Sometimes the local agent advised the IRO to provide transportation if family members were willing to provide shelter and to help the immigrant find employment. Implementation was usually rapid; the immigrant was on the train within days of approval of the application, and the local agent was promptly advised (usually by telegram) of his travel schedule.

Although little correspondence survives for the earliest years of IRO activity, Abram Simon and Frederick Cohn, successive rabbis of Temple Israel, and Philip Gottheimer and Morris Levy, prominent members of the Omaha Jewish community who were active in B'nai B'rith and the Associated Jewish Charities, participated in the settlement of several

families of Romanian Jews. David Bressler handled these transfers as manager of the Romanian Committee. In one fairly typical case, after several interviews with Samuel Abramowitz, Gottheimer wrote to Bressler recommending that the Romanian Committee send the immigrant's family to Omaha.

Samuel Abramowitz is 38 years old, . . . is a shoemaker by trade, has a shop at his residence and earns from 12-15 dollars per week. He has been in this country 2 years and in this city about 6 months and in the opinion of Nebraska Lodge . . . is able and willing to support his family and a person worthy of the aid of your honorable committee.<sup>11</sup>

M. L. Caplan, IRO traveling representative, visited Omaha in July 1904, "met with five of the representative Jews . . . and perfected the organization of the Industrial Removal Office in Omaha. It was not effected without difficulty."<sup>12</sup> Caplan wrote:

This is a pretty big order for Omaha. Conditions are not the same here as in Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati and other places. There are not as many outlets for the capabilities of our people. I doubt that the people here will be able to carry out their agreement, however willing they may be.<sup>13</sup>

## Industrial Removal Office

Caplan and the committee agreed that five individuals per week would be sent to Omaha. The agent would be paid a salary of \$35 weekly for handling these five individuals, and \$5 per person would be granted for one week's board. The IRO would pay for the transportation from New York to Omaha of the household effects of families of men already settled in Omaha. Families of other Omaha residents, who were not IRO clients originally, would be required to pay half of the total fare.<sup>14</sup>

Apparently Philip Stein became the local agent shortly after the Omaha IRO committee was formally organized, and he was sometimes assisted by Esau Fleishman, who had been responsible for receiving some of the Romanians who arrived in 1901-2.<sup>15</sup>

Harry B. Zimman, who served on the city council and briefly as interim mayor of Omaha, acted as IRO agent from 1907 until 1912, when Helen Grodzinsky and subsequently Fanny Rosenstock, who were employed consecutively as general secretary of the Associated Jewish Charities, took over. Zimman requested in 1912 to be relieved of his duties.<sup>16</sup>

The response of the Omaha Jewish community to the IRO program far exceeded Caplan's skeptical prediction. After the program got underway, the agent's salary was usually \$50 per month, and he was allotted monthly maintenance of \$10 per individual or \$25 per family. Sometimes, if fewer than the agreed upon number of men were sent, the salary was reduced. Often the entire per capita allotment was not spent and could then be applied to a later situation.

Zimman wrote emphatically to the IRO that he had guaranteed "the Associated Jewish Charities that no removal office case shall be dependent upon the Jewish Charities for any assistance" and that Zimman himself was obliged to provide for such cases in an emergency.<sup>17</sup> It seems clear that the existing Omaha Jewish community organizations did not wish IRO-



*Harry B. Zimman, IRO agent, 1907-12. Courtesy of Omaha World-Herald.*

sponsored settlers to increase demands on their already overburdened resources.

A typical form letter to the local agent from the New York office read:

Enclosed you will find record of applicant asking for transportation to your city. Will you please advise us whether we should comply with the request and if your reply is favorable will you kindly inform us how much contribution will be made by the person in your city referred to.

In this situation an individual living in the New York area apparently came to the IRO requesting assistance in getting to Omaha.

The Omaha agent typically would reply:

I [have] seen [the applicant's] father he is a poor man working hard to make a living and can not help his son with anything toward transportation and is in great need of his son's help if he is sent to Omaha as he can get work and be a help to his father so you may send him if you can.<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes advance planning was less careful and perhaps, less necessary. A telegram to Zimman in 1907 announced: "Sending family of nine, five wage earners, splendid material. Please do your best for

them." Nine days later, Zimman replied: "Accommodations secured, four of the five have been located at different work with fairly good wages — father to be employed soon."<sup>19</sup>

Some IRO transactions were initiated by prospective employers, although some of these employers abused both the system and the employees who were sent. Louis Kneeter, who a year earlier had himself been settled by the IRO in Omaha, requested a "good tailor" to whom he would pay a weekly wage of at least \$12. "We have arranged to send a man to you . . . through our agent," wrote the IRO assistant manager.

We believe that he is a first class ladies tailor and will suit you. Would you please do the best you can for the man, as we are anxious to have him become self-supporting in order that his family may be sent to him.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes tailor Kneeter refused to pay the wages he had previously promised and laid off the recently arrived needle workers. Some of his men complained to the IRO about the treatment they received from their employer. The New York office, after investigating the situation, decided to require that Kneeter contribute a minimum of \$15 toward the transportation of any men referred to him, hoping that an investment on the part of the employer might improve his treatment of the workers.<sup>21</sup>

Aaron Ferer requested ten men for work in his wholesale metal and junk business, promising \$8.50 to \$12 per week and steady work for "strong men." The IRO offered to send men providing they were paid a minimum \$10 weekly wage. Ferer refused to guarantee a \$10 wage, and Bressler responded that the IRO "wouldn't interfere with Mr. Ferer's policy for anything in the world, but we can't send him any men." It would appear that the IRO tried to protect its clients against exploitation and guarantee that they were adequately paid.<sup>22</sup>

Louis Slavin, president and manager of Omaha Plating Company, wrote to the IRO in 1913 asking assistance in finding two experienced polishers and

NEW YORK OFFICE  
685 BROADWAY

PARIS  
RUE ANDROISE THOMAS

1674 & DOUGLAS STS.

NEW YORK  
SEP 16 1907  
NEW YORK

**J. BRANDEIS**  
"BOSTON STORE"  
& SONS.

RETAILERS OF EVERYTHING  
FOR EVERYBODY.

Omaha, Neb., Sept. 12th, 1907

Industrial Removal Society,  
Cor. 11th & Second Ave., New York.

Gentlemen-

We are in need of men tailors in our Ladies Tailoring and Alteration Department, and understand that your society furnishes this sort of help. We can use four or five good hands on Ladies Jackets.

Kindly let us know by return mail your system for sending out this class of help.

Respectfully yours,

Danforth  
2

J. L. BRANDEIS & SONS

RECEIVED  
SEP 16 1907  
INDUSTRIAL REMOVAL SOCIETY

buffers. He promised to pay between \$15 and \$18 weekly and guarantee steady work

just so they are good honest moral men . . . I will treat them right and will aim to make it as pleasant for them as ever they had in their lives . . . We need some more good Jews out here. This is a nice clean healthy climatic place to live without any getos [sic]. I dont care if those men belong to a union even we work 9 hours a day nice clean shop to work in plenty ventilation but I dont want any fanatic anarchists that are killing the Russian Zaar every minute in the day and are a enemy to their employer . . . We have nice Jews here with clean faces and respectable dressed nice synagogues and can make it just as pleasant for them as in New York. I dont want no Greenhorn they must talk English.<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Slavin, perhaps, expected too much.

Occasionally the local agent learned of a position that he hoped the IRO could fill. In 1907 he requested a blacksmith to do horseshoeing and wagon repairing for \$2.00 to \$2.50 per day. The IRO doubted that it could find someone to fill that job. Perhaps it was the low pay that resulted in the negative response.<sup>24</sup>

Some immigrants wrote directly to the IRO to express their appreciation or to request assistance in getting friends and relatives to Omaha. Many of these requests were referred to the local agent. The immigrants either wrote in Yiddish or managed to find someone who could write a letter in English. Many of the letters are poignant:

I ask you to be so kind and sent to me my brother. I will find work for him, and do such a great deed.<sup>25</sup>

I wish to inform you that I came to Omaha and been all right. My cousin provided me with work and I am thankful to you for your kindness to me.<sup>26</sup>

Will you kindly make requisition for the family of Mr. Wiseman . . . who is a deserving and sober man, earning a fair living as a baker and being assisted likewise by his two daughters who together make seven dollars a week. He has permanent work and enjoys the confidence of his employer. I enclose . . . \$97.50 for 3 1/4 tickets.<sup>27</sup>

Please send Morris Lefkowitz a cousin of mine. This office that sent Sam Goldman should send him. I will take him at my house and you will have no trouble. He is a shoemaker and is going to work for me.<sup>28</sup>

Many Omaha businesses assisted the IRO. Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society.

LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE DOUGLAS 2165.

OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE  
810 AND 812 DOUGLAS ST.

**AARON JERER**  
METALS AND SCRAP IRON.  
RAILROAD MATERIAL A SPECIALTY.

Omaha, Neb. 6/10/-07

Mr H B Zinman,  
Weaver & Giller.,  
CITY.

Dear Sir:-

I would be obliged to you if you could spare me 10 men I need them for work which I can give them as long as they want to stay with me.

Yours truly,

AJ/MR/

RECEIVED  
SEP 16 1907  
INDUSTRIAL REMOVAL SOCIETY

## Industrial Removal Office

Zimman carefully investigated the applications of Hyman Ruderman, Harry Levin, and Nathan Pitler and determined that

in each case their friends and relatives . . . are able to contribute some money toward the expense in sending the applicants to Omaha. Unless you want to get rid of these able applications, I would advise not to send them until their friends contribute.<sup>29</sup>

There were times when "conditions make it impossible to send anyone . . . except on a full contribution of \$20."<sup>30</sup>

Economic conditions in Omaha often controlled the flow of IRO applications. This was particularly apparent in 1907, a year in which Jews were available for resettlement both from the east coast and from the port of Galveston. The Jewish Immigrants Information Bureau made the first attempt to divert immigrants from the eastern seaboard by creating a port of entry at Galveston, from which arrivals were to be disbursed. But the Galveston program coincided with the so-called Panic of 1907, and the effort had to be interrupted and then taken up again when economic conditions had improved. By the end of 1912 more than 5,000 immigrants had entered through Galveston.<sup>31</sup>

The Galveston Bureau was not sufficiently organized when immigrants started to arrive, and the IRO asked the cooperation of local agents in assisting those Galveston immigrants. But the timing was bad. Zimman wrote to Bressler near the end of 1907 that he was willing "to co-operate and do whatever I can . . . [but] I do not want to receive another applicant until I am able to secure employment for those that I have on hand."<sup>32</sup>

Bressler replied that the IRO would stop sending immigrants to Nebraska until notified by Zimman to resume. Bressler regretted "the bad industrial conditions prevailing throughout the country, as the number of applicants at our office daily is increasing and there is no corresponding outlet." Bressler thanked Zimman for accepting the immigrants from Galveston, stating



*Mrs. E. A. Schloss, IRO agent.  
(NSHS-P853)*

that he knew it would take considerable effort to place them.<sup>33</sup>

Soon after, Zimman wrote again to Bressler that

an unusual number of immigrants that were evidently distributed by the Galveston office throughout this part of the country have been coming into Omaha . . . a conservative estimate would be at least 20 that have called upon the Jewish Societies and my office for assistance. It seems that the parties from the different cities who agreed to care for such immigrants have not done their duty. It is wrong on the part of the other cities in unloading so many on our hands. We are sending as many of such men back to the cities from which they come . . . I report this to you with a hope that you can take this matter up with the Galveston people and remedy the situation.<sup>34</sup>

Bressler apologized for this turn of events and requested that Zimman write to Morris D. Waldman, head of the Galveston movement, explaining the facts in the case and listing the names of the men and the cities from which they claim to have been sent to Omaha. Waldman could then be expected to take the matter up directly with the proper parties in order to try to prevent such a situation from recurring.<sup>35</sup>

But Bressler was also in a desperate situation, because the supply of potential IRO clients exceeded the demand. He wrote:

I recognize your utter helplessness in view of the

present bad industrial situation. All that we can do is to wait patiently with a fervent prayer on our lips that times will soon be better. The misery in NY is awful and our inability to allay it to any extent is about as nerve-racking and soul-racking an experience as I have ever met.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, men were appealing to Zimman every day for help. He was using unexpended funds he had saved while managing the program to provide for the needs of the unemployed for whom he felt responsible. Board bills for the months of November and December 1907 plus loans to applicants exceeded \$500 and he had only about \$200 remaining. He feared "that when the money runs out they will be obliged to appeal to the charities of our city for aid" — an option considered unacceptable.<sup>37</sup>

In Lincoln, contrary to the situation in other cities, the local agents were chiefly women who headed the Naomi Society and the Jewish Ladies Aid Society. At various times Pauline Wessel, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schlesinger, Mrs. William Gold, Mrs. E. A. Schloss, and Nella Kohn served as IRO agents. IRO arrangements with representatives of the Lincoln Jewish community commenced in 1903 with an agreement to provide \$25 maintenance per family with a transportation contribution of \$10.<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Sam Wessel, president of the Naomi Society, agreed that the Lincoln Jewish community would accept one family per month for three months and

that after the first family is sent it is understood that others are not to be sent except on direct order of the Naomi Society, who are to be notified as to date of shipment, size of family and occupation of head of family.<sup>39</sup>

In 1907 the Lincoln community agreed to participate in the Galveston plan by taking two families and four single men every two months and at the same time notified the IRO office that they could no longer accept any more New York people.<sup>40</sup> This was a temporary interruption, however, and as the following correspondence indicates, before long New York IRO clients were again coming to Lincoln, though the process remained deliberate and carefully planned. The com-

munity was determined that its hospitality not exceed its ability comfortably to absorb these individuals:

Bore Altman, painter family, arrives Saturday afternoon. . . .<sup>41</sup> Have application from good sturdy man, age thirty two, wife, three children. Man junk peddler, willing to do anything. Wife willing to help. May we send, wire answer collect. . . . Will accept junk peddler and family wire when to expect. . . .

Sam Batwinick and family arrive Friday evening six on Burlington. . . . I am very pleased to learn that [Batwinick] is making a nice living, and I have no doubt that you and the other members of your committee are altogether responsible for his present happy condition. May we send you another family?<sup>42</sup>

Schloss replied that the community was willing to take another family, but "the man must have some trade, as we cannot find employment for peddlers or junk dealers."<sup>43</sup>

Late in the program Mrs. Kohn requested an explanation of IRO policy regarding family allotment, wondering if the IRO would still send \$25 with each family. Bressler replied that he "would appreciate if \$25 could be waived as finances are a real problem since war broke out but if allowance is necessary will try to send it."<sup>44</sup>

Bressler later explained that request cases, where applicants go to a certain city for particular employment and care by relatives, were not entitled to the \$25 allowance, which was made available only to "direct" cases, where the IRO selected the city and the local committee was responsible for housing and employment.<sup>45</sup>

Bressler explained that the IRO had

never set a uniform rate of contribution to be made by families who desire to be sent to other sections of the country but it has been our uniform policy to make the applicant pay as large a contribution toward the cost of his transportation as his ability permitted. At times the applicant himself could pay little or nothing but his relatives . . . could do so for him. At other times neither the applicant nor relatives could do anything. In that case we would send applicants without any contribution.<sup>46</sup>

The IRO attempted to arrange settlements in a number of other Nebraska towns, though this was almost fruitless in view of the size of the town and the fact that there were few



Samuel N. Wolbach of Grand Island.  
Courtesy of Stuhr Museum of the  
Prairie Pioneer.

Jewish families.

In 1902 Caplan called on Samuel N. Wolbach of Grand Island, who agreed that a cabinetmaker and a bricklayer would be sent in care of Mr. Krumenchuk. Soon afterward, he told the IRO that two "respectable" bricklayers could be sent immediately or not at all. But the two men soon quit, claiming the work was too hard, and were dispatched to Omaha, where Wolbach hoped

they will do better. The first man . . . was perfectly willing to work, but the last one seemed to be able to influence him to give up his position. . . . In case I can find any other position for any more, will let you know.<sup>47</sup>

By August 1904 Wolbach wrote:

We have now had three men sent here, two of whom have left and the latter still remaining is at work at the beet sugar factory. I think he will be able to keep his position for the present and in the meantime we will see what we can do with him so as to get him in a cobbler's shop. Until further notice Mr. Kremenchuk wishes me to inform you that he will not take in anybody as he claims it is too much work for his wife to board these people and ready work being not too plenty it would be quite an expense for as small a community as this to board these men. Please cancel all demands for men to Grand Island for the present.<sup>48</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in Hastings, where Mark Levy, president of The New York and Boston Clothing Company, agreed to accept two to four able-bodied men for farm or brickyard work, but then requested a one-month delay because of a late winter.<sup>49</sup> The IRO was unhappy with Levy's request and hoped that he would soon requisition more applicants

as we have a large number . . . poor and deserving, who find it impossible to make a living in this city and who are clamoring for a chance to be sent somewhere where they will be given a chance for respectable self-support.<sup>50</sup>

But this chance would not become reality in Hastings, Nebraska. After accepting one more man, Levy requested that the IRO "please do not send any more men, we can not get work for them before spring."<sup>51</sup> There is no evidence of further referrals to Hastings.

In 1904 M. L. Caplan met with A. C. Freshman of Beatrice, who agreed that the community would "cooperate . . . in assisting some of our unemployed immigrant co-religionists in becoming self-supporting." The IRO sent one "husky individual" to work in Freshman's junk yard and scheduled another man thirty days later. But Freshman informed Bressler that he could not use another man,

because he was discharging men on account of lack of work. I will take care of the man you sent me but do not send any more until you hear from me as we have no society here to take care of them.<sup>52</sup>

There are a few documents regarding IRO settlements in communities

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such as Creighton, Caldwell, and Fremont, but it would appear that these were isolated and ephemeral situations.

The IRO program in Nebraska operated on a one-on-one basis. The Lincoln and Omaha agents obviously felt personally responsible for the welfare of those individuals whose settlement they supervised and appeared to keep in contact with them until the newcomers were well settled in a job and home. Many IRO clients remained to become well-known and active members of the Jewish communities in Omaha and Lincoln.

The Nebraska experience would seem to indicate that where a Jewish community existed, the IRO program was able to function successfully, because it was possible to integrate the immigrants into an existing community that was able to provide some initial support for them. In the small towns, where no Jewish community existed, the IRO usually had to rely on one well-established individual, and the program soon became burdensome, not only for the sponsor but for the immigrant, whose stay was brief because he seldom felt at home in these small, predominantly Gentile communities.

In Omaha, the IRO program was, at least for most of its existence, independent of the community. In fact, Omaha IRO agents were determined that the immigrants they helped to settle would not be dependent upon the Jewish charitable organizations, which were already overburdened by immigrants who arrived in Omaha under other auspices. In Lincoln, where the IRO worked directly through existing organizations, the movement was carefully controlled and managed so as not to overburden the resources of the community.

The work of the IRO represents a fascinating chapter of American Jewish immigration history. For many Jews in this part of the country it answers the question: How did your family get to Nebraska? It was managed

by a skeleton staff in New York and one person on the receiving end, who were responsible for the transfer and care of over 2,000 individuals in this state and more than 75,000 in the United States as a whole over a period of sixteen years.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund* (Philadelphia, 1935), 185; Peter Romanofsky, "To Rid Ourselves of the Burden . . ."; New York Jewish Charities and the Origins of the Industrial Removal Office, 1890-1901," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 64 (June 1975), 338-39.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph, *History of the Baron De Hirsch Fund*, 185; Romanofsky, 338.

<sup>3</sup>Romanofsky, 338-39.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>5</sup>Gabriel Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers and the Story of the Jewish Agricultural Society* (New York: L. B. Fisher, 1943), 22.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph, 198. David Maurice Bressler (1879-42) was born in Charlottenburg, Germany, and came to the United States in 1884. He managed the IRO from 1900 to 1916 and later was active in the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and other efforts to assist European Jews. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1359.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph, 205.

<sup>8</sup>IRO annual reports indicate that between 1901 and 1913 2,035 individuals were settled in twenty-one Nebraska towns: Beatrice, Caldwell, Creighton, Foster, Fremont, Grand Island, Hastings, Lincoln, Madrid, Nebraska City, North Platte, Omaha, Ogallala, Pierce, Plattsmouth, South Omaha, Sidney, Valentine, and Wisner. Actual correspondence exists only for Beatrice, Caldwell, Creighton, Fremont, Hastings, Nebraska City, Lincoln, and Grand Island. Most of those settled in cities other than Omaha and Lincoln eventually found their way to these larger communities.

Official IRO figures for Nebraska: 1901:15; 1902:105; 1903:326; 1904:184; 1905:180; 1906:263; 1907:366; 1908:209; 1909:84; 1910:76; 1911:72; 1912:78; 1913:77. Correspondence indicates that a considerable number of individuals were settled in Nebraska between 1914 and 1920, with the heaviest concentration in 1914.

Thirteenth Annual Report of the IRO, 1913, January 1, 1914. Annual reports and other documents comprise the papers of the Industrial Removal Office at the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts. (Hereafter cited as IRO Papers.)

<sup>9</sup>Population figures are taken from the *American Jewish Yearbook* and from a survey of the Omaha Jewish community conducted by the Jewish Welfare Federation in 1924 and included in a "1929 Survey of the Omaha Jewish Community," 33.

<sup>10</sup>A bonus of the IRO papers is a collection of historic letterheads from a number of Nebraska Jewish-owned businesses.

<sup>11</sup>B'nai B'rith and several other organizations raised approximately \$500 to assist these Romanian families. (Minute book, Congregation of Israel, 328, undated; probably September 1900).

Philip Gottheimer, Secretary, Nebraska Lodge No. 354, Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, to Bressler, December 8, 1901. Gottheimer was proprietor of the Omaha Shirt Factory. Levy was president of Nebraska Clothing Company.

<sup>12</sup>The committee consisted of the following: Morris Levy, Chairman; Sam Frank, Nathan Spiesberger, Carl Brandeis, Harry B. Zimman, and Louis Harris, secretary.

<sup>13</sup>M. L. Caplan to Bressler, July 24, 1904, IRO Papers.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>IRO to M. Levy, April 5, 1902. Fleishman's daughter, Ella Auerbach, told the author that "father met every train . . . found living quarters for them or housed them in our own home until he found jobs for them in the packing houses smelters or Union Pacific shops . . . . Some families came with as many as five children and many were the pallets laid on the floor when we ran out of beds. Many were tailors and almost all unaccustomed to heavy manual labor, and lonely besides, as well as suffering from maladjustment to a new world so that they rebelled against jobs and demanded to be returned to New York, occasioning great worry and frustration for both Father and Mother. It was therefore a great source of gratification . . . that some of these families prospered . . . and achieved wealth and position in this and nearby communities." Questionnaire submitted by Ella Fleishman Auerbach, Aug. 1965)

<sup>16</sup>Zimman to Bressler, May 14, 1914, IRO Papers. For further biographical details, see Alfred Sorenson, *The Story of Omaha from the Pioneer Days to the Present Time* (Omaha 1923), 615; *Omaha Evening Bee*, March 1, 1936.

<sup>17</sup>Zimman to Bressler, Aug. 16, 1907; Bressler to Zimman, Sept. 5, 1907; IRO Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Louis Harris to Bressler, Jan. 8, 1906. In this particular case, the son was sent to his father in Omaha on Jan. 16, 1906, and a letter to this effect was mailed to Harris several days later.

<sup>19</sup>Bressler to Zimman, July 2, 1907; Zimman to Bressler, July 11, 1907.

<sup>20</sup>Assistant manager to Kneeter, July 17, 1905; assistant manager to Philip Stein, July 20, 1905.

<sup>21</sup>B. Fleishman to IRO, July 23, 1906; L. Kneeter to IRO, July 31, 1906; M. Coeter and J. Herman to IRO, Dec. 22, 1906; Bressler to Zimman, Nov. 24, 1907; P. Kalinsky to IRO, Nov. 1, 1908.

<sup>22</sup>Aaron Ferer to IRO, June 10, 1907; Zimman to IRO, June 21 and 26, 1907; IRO to Zimman, June 24, 1907, and July 1, 1907.

<sup>23</sup>Louis Slavin to Bressler, March 7, 1913.

<sup>24</sup>Zimman to IRO, June 21, 1907; IRO to Zimman, June 24, 1907.

<sup>25</sup>Max Cherpakov to IRO, n.d.

<sup>26</sup>M. Rebner to IRO, n.d.

<sup>27</sup>Rabbi Abram Simon to Bressler, May 22, 1903.

<sup>28</sup>Sam Goldman to IRO, April 27, 1905.

<sup>29</sup>Zimman to Bressler, June 3, 1908.

<sup>30</sup>IRO to Associated Jewish Charities, Jan. 15, 1915.

<sup>31</sup>Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, 205-9.

<sup>32</sup>Zimman to Bressler, Nov. 14, 1907, IRO Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Bressler to Zimman, Nov. 18, 1907.

<sup>34</sup>Zimman to Bressler, Dec. 12, 1907.

<sup>35</sup>Bressler to Zimman, Dec. 4, 1907.



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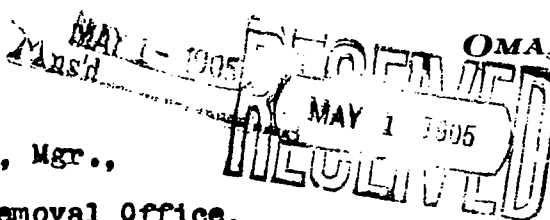
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OMAHA, NEB., Apr. 28, 1905.

David M. Bressler, Mgr.,  
Industrial Removal Office,  
New York.

Jacob Handler.

Dear Sir:-

Yours of the 25th received, and I made a clear investigation and found out that the son of above name is assisting his father as much as he can and will take care of him, and therefore, I recommend the party for the same and as far as the transportation is concerned he gave me \$10.00 which I enclose you and he says that is all he can spare.

Trusting that this will be satisfactory to the Removal office

I am,

Yours truly,

*Philip Stein*

*Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society.*

<sup>36</sup>Bressler to Zimman, Dec. 23, 1907.

<sup>37</sup>Zimman to Bressler, Jan. 7, 1908.

<sup>38</sup>IRO to Mrs. Sam Wessel, Feb. 7, 1903.

<sup>39</sup>M. L. Caplan to Naomi Society, July 23, 1904.

<sup>40</sup>Mrs. William Gold, pres., Jewish Ladies Aid Society, to IRO, Feb. 23, 1907.

<sup>41</sup>IRO to Schloss, Dec. 23, 1909.

<sup>42</sup>IRO to Schloss, Jan. 28, 1910. Schloss to IRO,

Jan. 30, 1910. IRO to Schloss, Feb. 2, 1910. Bressler to Schloss, June 20, 1910.

<sup>43</sup>Schloss to IRO, Apr. 7, 1910.

<sup>44</sup>Kohn to Bressler, Apr. 12, 1916; Bressler to Kohn, Apr. 17, 1916.

<sup>45</sup>Bressler to Kohn, June 26, 1916; Nov. 13, 1916.

<sup>46</sup>Bressler to Kohn, Nov. 13, 1916.

<sup>47</sup>Wolbach to Caplan, Apr. 9, 1902; Wolbach to

George David, IRO Assistant Director, May-27, 1902; Wolbach to IRO, Aug. 18, 1904.

<sup>48</sup>Wolbach to IRO, Sept. 13, 1904.

<sup>49</sup>IRO to Mark Levy, Jan. 27, 1903. Levy to George David, Feb. 1, 7, 1903.

<sup>50</sup>IRO to Levy, March 21, 1903.

<sup>51</sup>Levy to IRO, Sept. 20, 1904.

<sup>52</sup>Bressler to Freshman, June 26, 1904; Freshman to Bressler, Aug. 1, 1904.