The Pavalicher Society:
Ethnicity and Americanization

by
Susan M. Klein

I liked this paper. You successfully put a story with a strong individual and genealogical component into a broader context.

I think your organization at the beginning could have been a little better... I'm a little mixed.

I think you sometimes tried to cover too much information (stretched across several generations) in a single paragraph.

12/9/80
Professor Archdeacon
History 403

Jacob Nattrasson
535 N. Michigan 222-1686

Where was the shack?
Founded on the premise of "togetherness," the Pavalicher Society stood nearly seventy-five years to bring the landsleidt* and mishpockhe** of the town of Pavalich together for mutual aid, comfort, and enjoyment.¹

Throughout the years, the society changed and encompassed new functions. In the early part of the century, it was a group that brought fellow townsmen and women to America. For the children of the founders, the society provided free loans for business, health, and education. The society's third generation made the group a purely social organization, providing parties and lectures of its members.² These town clubs, often referred to as family clubs because of the number of intermarriages, were a fairly common phenomenon among Jewish immigrants.³ Pavalich was a town of about 2,500 to 3,000 people, about 100 miles south of Kiev in the Ukraine of Russia.⁴ The first Pavalichers left the area toward the early part of the 20th century during periods of economic hardship and social pressure that was mounting on the Jews of Russia at that time.⁵

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* Townsmen
** Relatives
1. Jacob and Rose Nathanson, interview
2. Ibid.
4. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
Pogroms in the Pavalich area are what finally prompted many of the Jewish townsmen and women to migrate. Most of the Pavalichers settled in Chicago; though, other sizable Pavalicher settlements are found in New York, Detroit, and San Francisco. For the purposes of this paper, I will only deal with the Chicago group. Over a period of twenty years, from 1900 to 1920, the family I will study, the Nathansons, settled in Chicago. Of the eight children of Israel and Ruth Nathanson, seven settled in the Chicago area. The eighth child was not allowed to leave Russia, as he was blind. All of the children were in their late teens and early twenties when they migrated to America; most were single or newly married. None were educated or had definite occupations. Of the married children, often the husband came to America first. After he had secured a job and some money, the husband sent for his wife and children. The is where the Pavalicher Society originates: it raised money for sailing passages to hasten the reunion of family groups. Any townsmen, woman or their descendants were eligible for membership in the Pavalicher Society; one need not be born in the Town of Pavalich to be a member. Setting-up townsmen in businesses was another function of the society.

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6. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
8. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
Those townsmen who were fairly established tried to secure jobs in the same industry for those less established Pavalicher's. The Nathansons, at first, were cigar makers. Later, they owned a ready-to-wear dress factory, which employed many Pavalicher's. Both these trades were commonplace for Jewish immigrants. This is where the second generation of Pavalicher's comes into play: as more and more Pavalicher's become established, free loans were available to all members of the society. One uncle who was referred to as a "playboy," came to this country possessing no viable skills, so the Pavalicher society bought him and his brother a laundry shop. The society was very concerned about the values and standards of its members. In this second generation of Pavalicher's, many marriages were arranged between the former townsfolk. Many of the marriages were intermarriages; the Nathanson's have seven incidences of intermarriage. The themes of family and Jewishness were stressed during this second generation period as a bind to keep the Pavalicher's growing physically and economically, together. Education was another aspect that the Pavalicher society was beginning to stress. Most of the second generation knew English, and many went to night school to complete high school educations or to learn trades. About a dozen members of the Nathanson family even attended college.

9. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
11. Jacob and Rose Nathanson, interview.
Though the society strove for the betterment of its members, aid was still an important factor in the basis of its being. Loans were always available to the needy and sick. There was even a charity fund for members in need. The strong mutual support that the second generation Pavalichers provided one another seemed to become less important with the third generation. The third generation descendants were, for the most part, economically stable, had some formal education, and were second and even third generation American citizens. The society became a social club, for the most part. Dances, banquets, and lectures were sponsored as fundraisers, not for the society itself, but for other charitable organizations.¹² (For example, United Jewish Appeal, homes for the elderly, orphanages) According to William Mitchell in his book Mishpockhe, family clubs often bought cemetery plots for their members.¹³ In 1927, a section of Waldheim Jewish Cemetery in Chicago was purchased by the Pavalicher Society, to be sold in plots to individual members and families of the group. A large, wrought iron gateway was erected: spelled out across the top is the name The Pavalicher Society, down the sides are the names of the founding members. The society existed as a social-charitable organization until about 1975. Slowly, the group's numbers dwindled.¹⁴

¹². Rose Nathanson, interview.
¹⁴. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
The death of the group's 100-year-old caretaker was actually the last link to the club's historic existence; all of the first and most of the second generation Pavelichers had died. Newer generations were too far removed as family members and as Eastern European ethnics to be associated with the group. In the next two sections, I will show what the group did for the ethnicity and Americanization of its members.

There is evidence that town/family clubs existed before the mass migrations to America. Most of these groups acted as benevolent and mutual-aid societies rather than social clubs. These societies in the country of origin probably provided funds for passage to America. Once enough landsmen were in America, the new immigrants probably raised funds that were sent home to the mother country, so other landsmen could migrate. Fundraising for passage to America, as in the case of the Pavelicher society, was of prime importance to the group. As far as maintaining ethnicity, Moses Rischin, in his book *The Promised City*, best expresses the immigrants' tie to the mother land and fellow townsman.

"From their earliest coming, the immigrants turned to their fellow townsman...The many sided landsmanschafts, uniting the features of the Old world burial, study, and visitors-of-the-sick societies, bound the immigrant to his shtetl and birthplace."
These immigrants, therefore, associated primarily with one-another. Their ethnic identity could constantly be reinforced with members of their motherland town. They had few, if any, native American examples to emulate that they either lived near or associated with. In Chicago, most of the Jews were congregated on the West side.\textsuperscript{19} The West side of Chicago, too, was the center of the Favalicher Society. This first generation lived almost unretouched from their motherland towns; many even associated with their same friends from the motherland.\textsuperscript{20} Area stores and restaurants were ritually kosher and advertised in Hebrew and Yiddish.\textsuperscript{21} Also, Jewish daily newspapers, like the \textit{Foreward}, flourished in the area.\textsuperscript{22}

The second generation of Favalichers were a more Americanized group than the first, but still gave to one-another a certain ethnicity. The group was still centered on the West side of Chicago. Meetings were once a month, but card parties were a weekly function. In other words, the group still socialized regularly with one another. Besides, they all attended the same synagogue; so, the Favalichers really saw one-another quite frequently. As I have mentioned before, Favalicher intermarriage was quite common. My grandparents were one of these marriages.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Pierce, Bessie Louise, \textit{A History of Chicago}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{20} Jacob and Rose Nathanson, interview.
\textsuperscript{21} Pierce, Bessie Louise, \textit{A History of Chicago}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{22} Netzger, Isaac, \textit{A Bintel Brief}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{23} Jacob and Rose Nathanson, interview.
Values and standards were an important ideal to the people of the second generation. In certain ways, though, their code of ethics was introspective; it was not Americanized. They were still associating with, dating, and marrying one-another.

"Shame is horrible to the shtetl. The individual was imbued with a strong sense of his individual worth as a member of the group with a strong sense of responsibility to play his proper role in the group." 24

Though the group was growing physically and economically, the club still acted as its backbone for loans, mutual support, and other types of aid.

"The patterns of giving and receiving represent a key mechanism in the shtetl, basic to individual relations and to community functions, and paramount in the ethical system to which all relations and all functions are referred." 25

Additionally, the businesses the Pavalichers engaged in were mere extensions of their social structure. The clothing manufacturing industry, a common business for Chicago Jews, 26 was also a common Pavalicher business. They often found one-another jobs within Pavalicher family-owned businesses or within Jewish subculture occupations: clothing manufacturing, cigar making. 27 This group was becoming more successful, but still was not highly Americanized.

27. Jacob and Rose Nathanson, Interview.
The third generation, on the other hand, maintained a symbolic ethnicity. Scholar Marshall Sklare in his book The Jews, says that, "Jews are more concerned with the maintenance of their group and act on that basis."28

The Pavalichers no longer lived within the same neighborhood. Many families had prospered and moved to the suburbs by this time. The families no longer went to the same synagogue, and meetings and get-togethers were less informal and frequent. The get-togethers were mostly formal dances and banquets that raised money for Jewish charities. The Pavalichers, themselves, no longer needed social welfare, so they raised money for Jewish brethren who were in need.

"Philanthropy was regarded as the very badge of Jewishness in the shtetl; it rewarded the individual giver by channeling his energies toward maintaining the equilibrium of the society."29

For the third generation, being a part of the Pavalicher Society was a link to one's roots and ethnicity. These people were fairly prosperous and were new to the suburban way of life; the Pavalicher Society provided them a place where they were socially acceptable and welcome at any time. Once a month, the Pavalichers met away from the suburbs, to maintain their Jewishness back in the "old" neighborhood on the West side.30

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30. Jacob Nathanson, interview.
The level of Americanization of the first generation Pavalichers would be considered minimal, compared to modern standards. These people came from a situation where they had no freedom of religious or economic pursuits. Granted, in America, there was discrimination in these areas, but there were also laws to protect these freedoms.\(^{31}\) Patriotism was high among Pavalichers, but it was an unusual kind of patriotism. It was more of an appreciation for being allowed to worship and conduct business as they pleased. Many of these people never learned English or even became American citizens, but they utilized fully certain rights which had been denied to them in Eastern Europe. This poem by Emma Lazarus, best describes this first generation's Americanization:

"Give me your tired, your poor  
your troubled masses yearning to breathe free,  
the wretched refuse of your teeming shores  
Send these the homeless tempest, toast to me  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."\(^{32}\)

The Pavalichers no longer wanted to be denied things basic to their heritage. Religion was a very important part of their lives, and America—and the Pavalicher's area on the West side of Chicago—provided a cloistered community where they could pray without fear and discrimination. In America, the Pavalichers could breathe free. The Pavalichers even had their own synagogue at one point in time.\(^{33}\) They basically transferred their Eastern European culture to Chicago; though, at the same time, utilized America's freedoms.

\(^{32}\) Lazarus, Emma, "Mother of Exiles," 1889.  
\(^{33}\) Rose Nathan, interview.
To the second generation of Pavalichers, Americanization was equally as important as ethnicity. Education, politics, and, to a certain degree, wealth, slowly brought them into American circles. Education, especially, college education, helped to bring the Pavalichers out of their West side area to other parts of the city, state, and country. In other words, an interaction of Pavalichers with gentiles and even other Jews, was beginning. The Nathanson's first clothing factory was purchased in the 1920s. A first generation member was the owner, but his second generation children actually ran the factory. Marshall Sklare in his book The Jews, says:

"Learning was widely encouraged and believed important for all. The good things of the world were considered both infinite and attainable, as they were in the shtetl. Then there were favoring social and economic factors. Jews, unlike most immigrant groups, came from a town trade-craft economy. They took readily to the trade opportunities in expanding American towns. And expanding American economy continued to enlarge the opportunities."

In the area of politics, one second-generation Nathanson brother was a precinct captain. According to family sources, he even changed his name from Abraham Nathanson, to Abraham Dalton. This was so he could better emulate his Irish political counterparts. These people, though still very ethnic in behavior, were beginning to explore and emulate America, beyond the confines of their mishpokhe, landsleidt, and shtetl.

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35. Rose Nathanson, interview.
The third generation Favalichers can be considered, at this point, American-Jews. By contrast, they cannot be considered Jewish-Americans because ethnicity is an incidental part and not a focal point of their lives. These people live, learn, work, and play next to people who are a variety of races and creeds. To some, religion and Jewishness remains a big part of their lives; though, for the most part, they consider themselves Americans. Also, at this time, the west side of Chicago starts to change. The area eventually becomes predominantly Black. So, no longer is the west side the focal point for Jewish socialization; the Favalichers begin to move northward toward the suburbs and the city proper. As I have mentioned before, banquets and dances were given for fundraising purposes. Though most of the organizations that the group raised money for were Jewish, some were general charitable organizations. (i.e. the Red Cross, war bond drives) This shows a shift, an encompassing of the community at large and America. Third generation Favalichers who were highly integrated into American society often helped other Favalichers achieve that status.  

William Mitchell in his book Mishpokhe says:

"Family clubs may also facilitate social mobility of some members. Membership gives access to a variety of life and occupational styles and role models."  

36. Jacob and Rose Nathanson, interview.  
37. Mitchell, William E., Mishpokhe, p.86.
This occurred within the Nathanson family with their success in the ready-to-wear garment industry. Though the garment industry was a typical almost subculture business for Jews, it serves to exemplify the Nathanson's success in America. The Nathansons eventually owned and operated several factories. The increased wealth sent several third and many fourth generation Pavalichers to law, medical, and various other graduate studies. No longer were the Pavalichers satisfied to stay within their area to practice their religious freedoms. This generation was highly Americanized because they interacted freely and commonly within American educational, business, and social circles.

In conclusion, the Pavalicher Society was an organization which promoted its members to have, depending on their generation, a greater or lesser degree of Americanization or ethnicity. The first generation was more ethnic than Americanized. The second generation was a combination of both, and the third generation was more Americanized than ethnic. The phenomenon occurred probably because of increased wealth, social pressure, industrialization, and a physical growth away from the apical town and ancestors. The descendants of the Pavalichers, for the most part, consider themselves American-Jews. They are Americans foremost, Jewish by heritage and religion; however, they do not consider themselves Pavalichers. The death of the Pavalicher Society has brought an end to the distinction of being a Pavalicher, but the society's memories live on as a rich heritage for subsequent generations.
WARD BOUNDARIES

The West Side neighborhood where many Jews & the Parallels lived 7th, 8th, & 9th wards
Boundary of Jewish Pale denoting Pavalich

[Map of Eastern Europe with labels for Baltic Sea, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Poland, Ukraine, Dnieper River, Volga River, Danube River, Black Sea, and boundary of Pale Settlement.]
Genealogy Chart of the Nathansons (Maternally)

David Nathanson

Chana

Mesha Shilamida Yossel Drael

Israel George

18 children total

Chaya Bassie Bobbae Surah Frima Max

Esther Nussie Isaac David Runzi

(Nathanson)

Isadore Jacob Rose Nathan Harry Sam Abe

Leah Sam (Klein)

Marshall Rita Maryanne

Fredrick Sharon Susan Julie Alan Marilyn Michelle Stephen Rachel

Larry Danny

Key: * intermarriage
Genealogy Chart of the Nathansons (Paterna)

David Nathanson

CHANA

Yossel Mecha Shilamida Ismael George

5 children total

Ruth

Aaryl Shandyl Pearl Shaly Matis Shima Max Mayer

Frima (Nathanson)

Isadore Rose Nathan Jacob Harry Sam Abe

Leah Sam (Klein)

Fredrick Sharon

Sam

Larry Danny

Marshall Rita Maryann

SUSAN JULIE Alan Marilyn Michelle Stephen Rachel

Key:
* blind child who never came to America
Bibliography


Nathanson, Jacob and Rose, interview with second-generation Pavlichers, 10/12/80.


North Riverside

Rabbi council OKs shopping center

The Chicago Rabbinical Council has reluctantly ruled that a shopping center may be constructed on an unused portion of Jewish Waldheim Cemetery in North Riverside, Rabbi Paul S. Greenman, a member and past president of the council, said Monday.

“The rabbis stated that had they been asked first, they would not have given their approval,” Rabbi Greenman said. He noted that digging for the shopping center already has begun, and that “technically, there is no desecration of graves. It is not on land that at any time was sanctified for graves.” But Rabbi Greenman added, “It was not done in good taste.” He said the shopping center project “did not take into consideration the sensitivity of the community at large.”

The land to be developed for the shopping mall is surrounded on three sides by graveyard. A road separates the graveyard from the mall site, and the developers plan to erect a buffer of trees, berms and bushes.
Dear Sid,

Back in January 1988 you requested the list of names of the United Tzaddikin that my maternal grandparents belonged to and are buried at Jewish Waldheim Cemetery in United Tzaddikin Section 228. You had interviewed my mother, Anne Rosenberg at this time as well in our times Rome. Hoping this info helps you. I'd be glad to take you to the section if you'd like. You'd see my grandparents and rest of my mother's family headstones. I'll have to visit Waldheim before Mother's Day to trace myself in the Spotmart store that had been built literally in the Jewish Waldheim Harlem Avenue side. My mother's family headstones face east towards Harlem Ave & we will see the back of Spotmart. My mother telephoned the Mayor of North Riverside & the Mayor sympathized with us Jews in this plight. My
Mother was furious that such a thing could happen in an undeveloped part of a cemetery. Next she talked to the Cemetery Association, and the lady was very nice but explained how Waldheim needed the money. My mother asked the lady of the Cemetery Association if she had anybody buried at Jewish Waldheim, and her answer to my mother was “Yes.” My mother talked to the owner of Sport Mart, who’s Jewish, and he was very nice but explained to my mother that Sport Mart is on consecrated land and told my mother “Do you know how valuable land is?” and “Do you know how much money I’m getting for this?” This guy’s telling my mother, now? You met my mother, she’s old enough to almost be this Sport Mart Etc’s grandma—at least his mother.

Now? This is respect for the dead. Or ask you?

8542 North Oleander
Niles, IL 60648

PS. Sorry you had to wait so long to get this.
United Pavolitcher Section 228
Jewish Waldheim Cemetery

Members who wanted their name inscribed in stone at the United Pavolitcher #228 Gate:

Ben Krasner
Helen Krasner
Sarah Probiski
Bessie Tversky
Sam Beitel
Sam Tenner
Dr. Irving Tenner
Bennie Givertz
Raymond Katz
Adolph & Gertrude France
Aaron Moslowsky
Joseph Werchowsky
Sam & Miriam Waller
Hassie Gomberg
Aaron & Eva Matanky
Ben & Bath Sheba Kreisna
Anna Kreisman
Harry Schwartz
Dr. Joseph Zinder
Nathan Fischer
Sarah Zipenko
Julius & Bessie Moltz

over
United Pavolitcher Lodge Members who wanted their names inscribed on the gate at United Pavolitcher #228 Jewish Waldheim Cemetery

Alex + Rose Moltz
Ann Siegal
Samuel Moltz
Dorothy Neldin
Sam + Miriam Reitman
Rachel Shabelman
Harry + Nettie Cutter
Anne Moltz Orleans

NOTE:
If you browse the United Pavolitcher #228 you’ll see even more headstones of my maternal grandparents’ landsmen from the town of Pavolitcher, Russia and all these people are buried at United Pavolitcher #228 along with my mother’s family.

My mother’s parents: 
Ceila Asher (died Dec. 6, 1949 age 67)
Hyman Asher (died Feb. 1949 age 67)

My maternal grandparents didn’t care to show off by having their names inscribed on the cemetery section gates.
Burt Robin  
5648 S. Harper Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60637  

February 3, 1995  

Dear Burt,  

Most of the material below is essentially the same as the letter I sent to you and Walter. The additions are in ( ).  

(Since the Board meeting on 2/1/95 Walter asked me to form a committee to plan and run the affair. Would you join me on this committee along with ( hopefully) Charles Bernstein, Clare Greenberg, Adele Hast and Norman Schwartz?)  

"Talked to Michael Terry this afternoon about the transfer of the CJHS Oral History Materials. We discussed dates and the mode of transfer.  

First, I asked that they give me some kind of a letter or a document which we can use to write our own version of a letter of transfer. (Please note the enclosed copy.) I leave the details to our resident attorneys.  

Second, I asked for some Sunday afternoon dates when the public transfer would be made ( at Spertus). Enclosed is a flyer with a movie on Sunday, March 5th and the event could be scheduled before or after the movie. The other open dates are:  

March 12th, April 9th or 30th.  

(My choice would be either the 9th or 30th April.)  

Third, at the ceremony you would be the official to turn them over, possibly to Howard Sulkin. (Walter suggested that this should t
I have typed verbatim what my sister-in-law received on the town of Pavoloch from the Museum of the Diaspora.

Pavoloch, townlet in Zhitomir Oblast, Ukrainian S.S.R. A Jewish community is first known to have existed in the townlet at the beginning of the 17th century. In 1736 the haidamacks carried out a pogrom in Pavoloch, massacring 35 Jews and engaging in plunder. Records of 1765 show 1,041 Jews as paying the poll tax in Pavoloch and its vicinity. Jews numbered 2,113 in 1847, and in 1897 the number rose to 3,391 (42% of the total population). During the civil war the townlet declined and most of its inhabitants left. Jewish residents numbered 1,837 (88.2% of the population) in 1926. The Jews who remained in Pavoloch during the Nazi occupation in World War II were exterminated. There is no information on Jews living in Pavoloch after World War II.

Excuse my lousy typing! Also enclosed is another sheet she sent me on a Jewish family register at the Museum of the Diaspora. I thought it might be interesting to you as well.

Thank you so much for being a part of my show. In producing this show, I have learned so much about the history of my people and especially my family! I have you to thank for this, and most importantly for making the show a success!

Sincerely,

Sue

08/17/86
See also The Pavalitch Society:

Hate: Turn papers by Susan M. Klien 12/09/1980

AEC/1959 DAVID MAMOT AMES.

*Ansche Pavalitch Cong still at 1539 S. Christiania Ave
in 1948.
(were at this address in 1923).
Dear Mrs. Nathanson:

Sorry to hear the bad news about your brother. Somehow in the near future I will make arrangements to get "the rabbi story".

Can you reidentify the news in the picture? Please call me with news. 708-541-2188

Sincerely Yours

[Signature]

DEAR MR. SORKIN,
SUE SAID THIS PICTURE IS HER UNCLE MARSHALL MOLTZ, MY HUSBAND'S nephew. BEST REGARDS, Rose Nathanson