

"Shoddy," Anti-Semitism and the Civil War

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At the outset of the Civil War, the fruit of anti-Semitism was ripe for harvesting.¹ Ethnocentric beliefs expressed a preference for white, native-born Protestants. Because immigration between 1850 and 1860 had swelled the Jewish population,² and the tenets of Judaism did not match the popular standard of religious acceptability, Jews were automatically indicted on two of the three counts: the vast majority of Jews were not native-born; and, except for the anomaly of isolated conversions, few passed the litmus test of religious legitimacy.³ Although historian John Higham identified General U. S. Grant's December 1862 expulsion of Jews from his jurisdiction "as the principal nativistic incident of the war years," the element of nativism in the cartoon medium had emerged as early as the summer of 1861.⁴ Of course, nativism and religious difference continued to wield a vital force in the appraisal of Jews for the duration of the war and beyond.

Ethnocentrism was not the only national blemish. Pejorative economic and political stereotypes such as "avaricious," "exploitative," and "politically subversive"—the heritage of ages of prejudice—were commonplace in the American lexicon of anti-Semitism. Such beliefs added potency to an already virile ethnocentrism; the resultant effect markedly increased the probability of some form of intolerance. Because sensitivity to any assessment of perceived political subversion reaches its zenith in wartime, the circulation and availability of such beliefs was not a good omen for the image of Jews.

While ethnocentrism and stereotyping may be necessary elements in rationalizing ethnic beliefs, feelings, and behavior, neither alone nor to-

1. The standard work on anti-Semitism and the Civil War remains Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1951).

2. "Exact statistics are unavailable, but we cannot be very far from the mark in estimating that at least two-thirds of the approximately one hundred and fifty thousand American Jews in 1860 were immigrants." *Ibid.*, 1.

3. In time, a general susceptibility to racial explanations combined to argue in favor of biological determinism. In so doing, the notion of race was also invoked to characterize the behavior of Jews, Irish, Italians, and other hyphenated Americans. John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore and London, 1984), pp. 45-47.

4. John Higham, *Strangers In The Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York, 1973), p. 12.

gether do they constitute a sufficient condition for prejudice. For an ethnic group to become a significant target of derision or discrimination, that group must also be visible. The confluence of adverse living conditions in Europe, and the hope of expanded freedoms in the new world, spawned the demographic conditions essential for sharpened Jewish visibility. The sheer number and rapid influx of immigrants, the concentration of Jews in urban settings, and their cultural singularity—for example, the temporary language barrier for German Jews—accentuated real or imagined differences. Having attained a conspicuous standing, Jews became even more vulnerable to public censure.

Then, when it became apparent that some wartime contractors were providing substandard uniforms, food, weapons, and other military supplies at outrageous prices, the volatile mixture of ethnocentrism, stereotypical beliefs, visibility, and the unsettling climate of war promoted scapegoating against Jewish citizens.⁵ Not long after the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, illustrators for *Vanity Fair*, the *New York Illustrated News*, and *Phunny Phellow* began imputing to Jews subversive motives and conduct inimical to the union military cause. Also in 1861, the exclusion of Jewish chaplains from the armed forces gave substance to the fear of concrete discrimination. Moreover, when "the army happened to arrest a trader or smuggler who was Jewish, his religion was noted in the record, though no other religion was."⁶ This practice increased the chance for guilt by association. Eventually, the anti-Semitic behavior of influential military leaders such as Grant, Butler, Hurlbut, and Sherman further exposed the roots of institutional intolerance.⁷ Arguably, the manifestation of anti-Semitism in the media and

5. This study concentrates on anti-Semitism on the Union side of the conflict. For anti-Semitism in the Confederacy, see, Korn, pp. 175–188; and Eli N. Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York, 1988), pp. 198–210.

6. Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York, Oxford, 1991), pp. 107–108. Bertram Korn also noted a comparable unfair practice of some northern newspapers. "An indication of the anti-Jewish tendency of the age was the common practice of Northern newspapers to identify as a 'Jew,' 'Israelite,' or worse yet, a 'German Jew,' any Jew who was apprehended in or suspected of carrying on disloyal activities . . . This journalistic technique was at one and the same time the product of prejudice and an agency for its dissemination. It fixed ever more strongly in the mind of the reader the myth of the dishonest, law-breaking Jew. But it could never have been used unless there had been an acquaintance with the myth in the first place." Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, p. 158.

7. General Sherman's fears that "the country will swarm with dishonest Jews who will smuggle powder, pistols . . . in spite of all the guards and precautions we can give" was typical of parallel decisions and behaviors of generals Grant, Hurlbut, and Butler. Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, pp. 148–149, 122, 153–154.

the military attested to the gradual infiltration of prejudice in some elements of the power structure. Thus ethnocentrism, stereotypes, visibility, expressions of perceived threat, and concrete support from some in key positions of authority constituted a formidable constellation of variables leading to various degrees of real or potential antipathy toward Jews.⁸

Unlike conventional historical investigations of anti-Semitism and the Civil War, this research does not use illustrations as mere visual aids but as primary source material.⁹ The systematic deposition of graphic images left behind an unselfconscious record of anti-Semitism in periodicals such as *Vanity Fair*, *Phunny Phellow*, *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The New York Illustrated News*. A frequency tally of the visual record shows anti-Semitism peaking in 1861 and 1864. Among the magazines, the Frank Leslie publications and *The New York Illustrated News* were the major carriers of anti-Semitism. Dominating the themes were economic stereotypes, but in the context of war, these images also bore overtones of political subversion. During the Civil War period, a survey of illustrations tinged with anti-Semitism implicated Jews in several contexts: Ulysses S. Grant's General Order Number 1; smuggling goods between Confederate and Union lines; mediating foreign intervention; tampering with gold, cotton and/or stock market prices; as camp followers seeking economic gain; and as the ubiquitous "shoddy." As we shall see later, the term "shoddy," as applied to anti-Semitism, gratuitously linked Jews with the production and distribution of inferior products to the military, allegedly jeopardizing the health and welfare of soldiers and the security of the nation. In terms of the number of illustrations from the above-mentioned categories, "shoddy" is the decisive anti-Semitic slur; therefore, "shoddy" came to represent the quintessential stereotype of the unpatriotic Jew.

The original meaning of "shoddy" was innocent enough. "Shoddy," properly speaking, is the short wool carded or worn from the inside of cloth, without fibre or tenacity, and with no capability of wear, and yet

8. For a more complete exposition of this model, see the unpublished manuscript of Gary L. Bunker, "A Value-Added Model of Oppression," joint meeting of the Western and Rocky Mountain Psychological Associations, Reno, NE, April 27-30, 1989.

9. See John J. Appel, "Popular Graphics as Documents for Teaching and Studying Jewish History," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York, 1976); and Rudolf Glanz, *The Jew in Early American Wit and Graphic Humor* (New York, 1973). For the application of this historical approach to another maligned minority see, Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834-1914* (Salt Lake City, 1983).

easily made into the semblance of more durable goods.”¹⁰ With the outbreak of the Civil War, the popular referent quickly changed. A spirit of profiteering accompanied the race to clothe, equip, and feed soldiers rushing into war.¹¹ Loose regulations and supervision fostered abuse by war contractors. The concomitance of exorbitant prices and inferior products led to investigations of graft and corruption. Soon, when “shoddy” referred to a product, it signified “any description of rotten or improper material.”¹² But the word “shoddy” was also affixed to the alleged perpetrators who bilked the government and short-changed military personnel in dire need. “The ‘boys’ have nick-named the army contractors in general ‘Shoddies,’ ” wrote a *Vanity Fair* correspondent from General Stone’s column, “and when any of these personages make their appearance the cry of ‘Shoddy! Shoddy!’ goes up from all parts of the camp!”¹³ Now the broadened referent included “swindling and humbug of every character”¹⁴ or “a synonym for miserable pretence in patriotism.”¹⁵ The final step in the transformation of connotation was to libel an ethnic minority, Jews, with the label “shoddy.”

Indeed, the cognitive process linking “the sons of Israel” from “Chatham Street” to the “shoddy” is preserved in these lines of doggerel from *Vanity Fair* in the “The Triumph of Israel”:

In times like these it is a real treat
To ramble by the stalls of Chatham Street,
Where, all day long, the sons of Israel
With smiles obsequious their goods do sell;

Viewed, as I have, the swindle-stitched disgrace
Of uniforms daubed with sordid lace,
With cheap tag-rags disguised, and paltry loops,
Served out by mean contractors to our troops:

The weak devices in moth-eaten felt
That straight before the summer shower melt,
The “petersham,” enough to make a body
Desponding, and that other sham, the “shoddy”;

10. Henry Morford, *The Days of Shoddy: A Novel of the Great Rebellion in 1861* (Philadelphia, 1863), p. 174.

11. For a broad overview of this issue, see Fred Albert Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army, 1861–1865* 2 vols., (Cleveland, 1928).

12. Morford, *Days of Shoddy*, 174.

13. *Vanity Fair*, 23 November 1861, 230.

14. *Ibid.*, 23.

15. *Ibid.*, 174.

Is it a wonder that one's mind replete
Should turn to Sholomonsh of Chatham Street,
Whose vilest "warranted to wash and wear"
With those things favorably must compare?

Go on, good Sholomonsh! by contrast crowned;
Proceed: disseminate much virtue round:
Continue; till for truth men look to you,
"O! my prophetic soul, my Uncle!" do.¹⁶

At the time, an accusatory spirit, propagated by the excesses of unprincipled contractors, was rife in the land. Although the vast majority of allegations were generic rather than ethnic in origin, Jewish Americans felt the sting of malice. On July 22, 1861, the *New York Tribune* summarily tried Jews in the press by associating "speculators and Jew brokers" with the sale to the government of a bad batch of cattle.¹⁷ As the connotation "shoddy" was repeatedly associated with Jews, symbolic conditioning offered a ready-made, seductive stereotype for those who sought gratification in condescension (Figure 1). In November 1861, over the caption "Shoddy Patriotism," that stereotype was enthroned in cartoon form in the humor periodical *Phunny Phellow*. The dialogue in the subcaption lays bare the prejudice:

Recruiting Sergeant—Come, Moses, rub up your
patriotism, and join the Union forces.

Jew—Mine cot, no! I have as mooch as I can
do to supply de army mit coot uniforms, upon
vich I makes noting at all, s'elp me got!¹⁸

The Jew in the cartoon declining service in the armed forces, bearing the title "shoddy," and betraying his foreign origin with broken English combine to underscore the image of the subversive Jew.

Words like "shoddy" and even "contractor" acquired not only negative but harsh meanings.¹⁹ Moreover, severe measures were reserved

16. *Vanity Fair*, 10 August 1861, 71. In the text, two verses (the second and third) are omitted.

17. Shannon, *Union Army*, I: 73.

18. *Phunny Phellow*, November 1861, 5.

19. See, "The Dream of the Army Contractor," *Vanity Fair*, 17 August 1861, p. 77; "The Song of Shoddy," *Vanity Fair*, 21 September 1861; and "The Contractor's Complaint," *Vanity Fair*, 8 February 1862, p. 73. The Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, was caricatured awash in a sea of questionable contracts. *Vanity Fair*, 21 September 1861, front page and p. 144.



SHODDY PATRIOTISM.

RECRUITING SERGEANT—Come, Moses, rub up your patriotism, and join the Union forces.

JEW—Mine cot, no! I have as mooch as I can do to supply de army mit coot uniforms, upon vich I makes noting at all, s' elp me got!

Figure 1. "Shoddy Patriotism." Courtesy of Providence Public Library.

for "shoddy" business practices. One illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* proposed hanging²⁰; another suggested tar, feathers, and riding "shoddy" out of town on a rail.²¹ A few lines of doggerel in *Vanity Fair* suggested that tears should not be shed if one Shoddy choked another.

If a Shoddy
Meet a Shoddy
A-taking of his "rye,"
And a Shoddy
Chokes a Shoddy
Need anybody Cry!²²

The *New York Tribune* described vultures as "human compared with monsters who furnish rotten blankets and rotten meat to the living in the camp."²³ These hostile images would not be easily forgotten. Furthermore, some cartoons were sufficiently ambiguous to allow the eye of the beholder to draw his or her own conclusions. For example, a cartoon in *Harper's Weekly* on the theme of "shoddy" featured some of the villains with elongated noses.²⁴ Although there may have been no artistic intent to denote ethnicity, the physiognomic stereotype was salient enough to allow for a projective response.²⁵ In any event, even generic allusions to the concept of "shoddy" were capable of eliciting anti-Semitic imagery. But "shoddy" was not the only manifestation of intolerance toward Jews.

Cartoonists found other pretexts for maligning Jews. Although these other images differed in emphasis from "shoddy," the elements were essentially the same. Economic and political stereotypes dominated the central motif. In December 1861, *Vanity Fair's* H. L. Stephens caricatured the confederate "Exodus to Nashville" led by Judah Benjamin. A balloon caption further linked Judaism to the confederate cause with the lamentation, "No more shall the children of Judah sing."²⁶ (Figure 2) Perhaps because of Judah Benjamin's southern political prominence, a cartoonist for the *New York Illustrated News* pictured Jefferson Davis as "Old Moses Davis," trying to persuade Prince

20. *Harper's Weekly*, 24 August 1861, 531.

21. American Antiquarian Society, Samuel B. Woodward Collection, folder 3, no. 27.

22. *Vanity Fair*, 23 November 1861, 230.

23. *New York Tribune*, 25 May 1861, 4.

24. *Harper's Weekly*, 10 August 1861, 512.

25. "Levi—"It is the strangest thing, I have plenty of hair on my head but can't raise a mustache." *Friend of Levi*—"Your nose makes too much shade, my boy; nothing can grow in the shade." *Comic Monthly*, August 1862, p. 3.

26. *Vanity Fair*, December 1861, 253.



Figure 2. "Old Moses Davis to Prince Napoleon." Courtesy of Providence Public Library.

Napoleon to favor the South.²⁷ The dialect emphasized the foreign element. "Now, my dear poy, come over to our side—don't go to the old man [Lincoln] on de utter side of de way. Ve vill let you have de cotton at your own price—sheap. Come, my poy!" (Figure 3) One week later, the *New York Illustrated News* gratuitously shows Lincoln condoning anti-Semitism.²⁸ Lincoln confronts "Shylock" at the entrance of the *London Times*. "No Shylock—we did not come about the loan—we have money enough, and to spare, at home. But we thought, since our English brethren had come to be ruled by such as you, and your hirelings, yonder, that we had better keep an eye on you." In due time,

27. *New York Illustrated News*, 19 August 1861, 256. Judah Benjamin was not always censured. *Harper's Weekly* applauded the selection of Judah P. Benjamin as Attorney-General of the Confederate States. *Harper's Weekly*, 1 June 1861, 341.

28. *New York Illustrated News*, 26 August 1861, 272.



Figure 3. "John Bull and the American Loan." Courtesy of Providence Public Library.

Lincoln's decisive action, granting the full rights of chaplaincy to Jews and rescinding General Grant's ill-advised exclusionary policy, refuted any uncertainty as to where Lincoln stood on the matter of anti-Semitism. Marshalling the full weight of executive power to stave off discrimination was the most important Civil War act in behalf of Jews.

In comparison with other Jewish illustrations for 1861, the final image is serene. It touched on a universal theme. Where is there an army without soldiers complaining about the quality or quantity of the food? Troopers from the Union ranks were no different. They bemoaned the

steady diet of pork.²⁹ But the *New York Illustrated News* publicized the plight of the devout "Hebrew volunteer" complying with dietary laws.³⁰ The cartoon hardly qualified as anti-Semitic, although it did accent cultural distinctiveness.³¹

Ironically, two of the more blatantly offensive anti-Semitic actions, General Grant's Order Number 11 and the exclusion of Jews as chaplains in the armed forces, were not popular topics in the cartoon medium. In each instance, credit President Lincoln's bold, resolute act in reversing the tide, muting the potential effects of those discriminatory policies. Had Lincoln in any way countenanced the proposed exclusions, the results might have been devastating. *Vanity Fair*'s allusion to Lincoln's censure of Grant took the form of a "Hebrew Catechism." "Question—'What kind of evergreen might General Grant have represented by this time, had not the President come down upon him?' Answer—'A Jew Nipper.'" ³² Lincoln's action nullified Grant's ill-advised order, and the phrase "had not the President come down upon him" was of immeasurable worth to embattled Jews held hostage by prejudice (Figure 4).

But General Order Number 11 would come back to haunt Ulysses S. Grant.³³ In an 1882 meeting at Chickering Hall, Grant had apparently expressed "Sympathy for the Persecuted Jews in Russia." *Puck* magazine contrasted his 1862 order "excluding Jews from the Army" from his more recent remarks under the caption: "Then and Now—1862 and 1882."³⁴ "Army Order No. 11" was symbolized by a crocodile skin draped around Grant. Although Grant was ostensibly weeping for the treatment of contemporary Jews, so were crocodile tears coming from the emblem of the 1862 policy. The cartoonist cleverly imputed to Grant disingenuous motives in the inscription "Jewish Vote 1884," floating in the giant pool of tears.

Nor was the 1862 exclusion easy for General Grant to explain when confronted with the facts while running as a candidate for the presi-

29. Shannon, *Union Army*, I: 79.

30. *New York Illustrated News*, 9 September 1861, 304.

31. For some, one other cartoon may have conjured up anti-Semitic imagery. The artist portrays a "European Capitalist" in dialogue with Jefferson Davis. Davis asserts: "I can call millions across the vasty deep." To which the capitalist replies: "Ferry goot, but vill dey comes." *New York Illustrated News*, 11 November 1861, 32. The dialect and general appearance of the capitalist resemble Jewish images in other illustrations.

32. *Vanity Fair*, February 1863, 19.

33. For the particulars of the infamous order, see John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale, 1979), 7:50–57.

34. *Puck*, 15 February 1882, 376.

THEN AND NOW.—1862 AND 1882.



"OH, NOW YOU WEEP, AND I PERCEIVE YOU FEEL
THE DINT OF PITY. THESE ARE GRACIOUS DROPS."

Figure 4. "Then and Now—1862 and 1882." Courtesy of Library of Congress.

dency in 1868. *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun* juxtaposed Grant's unpleasant dream of a "Vision of Jerusalem" with an announcement in the *Tribune*: "The fact that the Jews have endorsed General Grant is a gratifying one."³⁵ The vision did not depict a happy reception for Grant in the Jewish community.³⁶ Grant's nightmare was full of unsettling hostility.

Although 1862 contained fewer negative visual images of Jews, the undercurrent of anti-Semitism continued its course. "The ambivalence toward Jews was captured in a poem from *Harper's Weekly* entitled "The Jew's Garden."³⁷ Although the poem praised "the little old Jew, so cheerful and fond of flowers," the poet made it clear that here was an exception to the rule. For another verse chanted the litany of scorn:

And I thought, this old man here, to this day,
May have lived by brokerage, cheat, and bribe—
May have fawned, and lied, and clutched, and grown gray
In the sordid curse of his tribe.³⁸

In the early months of 1863, a gold panic on Wall Street sent the market into a tailspin and the media scurrying after a scapegoat. Although President Lincoln and Secretary of the Treasury Chase took the immediate brunt of the reproach, the Jews were not far behind the chain of denunciation. "Most of the heavy speculators were Jews," said a journalist for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, "and they cut miserable figures as they rushed to and fro, foaming at the mouth, cursing with impotent rage Old Abe and Secretary Chase, who had brought this ruin on the house of their fathers."³⁹ Soon, illustrations followed in the wake of the economic turbulence, as the latent propensity for anti-Semitism became reality. Frank Bellew, artist for the Leslie publications, linked Jews and gold in his illustration labeled "A New Toy for the Rising Generation."⁴⁰ A cartoon in *Yankee Notions* announced in its

35. *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, October 1868, p. 16.

36. For the ramifications of the controversy engendered by the 1868 election, see Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, pp. 132–133.

37. *Harper's Weekly*, 5 July 1862, 431.

38. Of course, these images only modestly sample the universe of contemptuous examples from 1862. For example, for the linkage of John Bull to Professor Rothschild, see *Comic Monthly*, September 1862, 8.

39. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 21 March 1863, p. 402. "There was as little truth in this accusation as in any other blanket generalization; the New York Jewish editors dared their secular colleagues to walk to the gold curb and count Jews, so certain were they that a very small proportion of Jews could be found there." Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, p. 161.

40. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 11 April 1863, 48. The same cartoon appears in *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, June 1863, 5.

caption a "Terrific Explosion of the Gold Bubble in the Camp of the Children of Israel."⁴¹ In the *Budget of Fun*, a wary Secretary Chase plunders an unwary Jewish "Speculator in Gold" in a "Scene from the new pantomime of 'The Yellow Fever.'" ⁴² Meanwhile, the *New York Illustrated News*, in a sketch by H. J. Kurtz, used the atmosphere of antipathy to show "Jews Smuggling Goods Across the Potomac."⁴³ Yet a more discordant note of anti-Semitism was sounded with the appearance of a condescending cartoon in late 1863. Once again, the *Budget of Fun* was the sponsor in "The Golden Rule or The Wall Street Thermometer."⁴⁴ The gauge of a bull or bear market is shown in the countenance of Jewish faces expressing degree of sadness or elation. At the left base of the illustration, the "fatted calf" is the focal point of worship, and, to the right, Jewish investors presumably determine the market's strength or weakness.

Although the images of "shoddy" tended to dominate 1864, there were exceptions. From the genre of political caricature, the *New York Illustrated News* ridiculed James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the rival *New York Herald*, calling him Shylock.⁴⁵ The economic stereotype of Jews is invoked in the caption. When a woman describes Bennett as wealthy, he replies: "Wealthy, ah, dat ish von great mishtake, but I will advertise your book for seventy-five cents ze line, cash down, and no agents admitted."⁴⁶

While the concept of "shoddy" was introduced in 1861 and made its presence felt in 1862 and 1863, it reached the apex of its influence in 1864. Moreover, the bonds of anti-Semitism to "shoddy" were strengthened with each repetition of association, and set in concrete roughly a year before the end of the war. When Henry Morford's book *The Days of Shoddy* was published in 1863, the author predicted that those days "will not end until the contest [Civil War] closes, and they

41. *Yankee Notions*, May 1863, 149.

42. *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, June 1863, 4.

43. *New York Illustrated News*, 2 May 1863, 4. "The traffic carried on between the enterprising Jews on the Maryland shore and the needy rebels on the other side of the Potomac has become so extensive as to attract the special attention of the government." Ibid., 3. "It was not only the Jewish bankers of New York who were disloyal to the government, . . . so the rumors ran—but at every geographic point of contact between the Union and the Confederacy, Jews were supposed to be doing the actual work of supplying the South with goods and the necessities of war." Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, p. 162.

44. *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, December 1863, 12.

45. *New York Illustrated News*, 30 April 1864, 432.

46. This was biting satire, because "James Gordon Bennett's widely read *New York Herald* displayed particular vehemence in its denunciation of Jews." Jonathan D. Sarna, "Anti-Semitism and American History," *Commentary*, March 1981, 43.

may linger long after. While the nation remains in distress or society convulsed," continued Morford, "thieves (moral, social and pecuniary) will continue to embrace their opportunity."⁴⁷ Although Morford wrote about the generic "shoddy," and even went out of his way to disclaim that the type he was after was "the old clo' dealer of Chatham Street," he nevertheless pointed out that the old clothes dealer "advertised that he would pay the very highest price for cast-off clothing, as he had 'extensive orders from the government.' " Such allusions, together with his reference to "the slop-shops of Chatham Street," did not discourage readers from perceiving a relationship between Jews and "shoddy."⁴⁸

General references to "shoddy" in 1862 and 1863 lingered. Cartoon captions exclaimed: "The new camp blankets are so remarkably fine, that many of our soldiers use them for fishing-nets"; or elsewhere, "these 'shoddies' [our army blankets] are awful cold."⁴⁹ (Figure 5) *Harper's Weekly* contrasted three sets of panels in a prominent illustration.⁵⁰ In the first, a soldier is exposed to the bitter elements of weather, while the shoddy contractor indulges his appetite at a bar. The second compares the grim circumstances of the soldier's wife with the lavish lifestyle of the contractor's spouse. The final panel contrasts soldiers in the life and death struggle of war as the purveyors of "shoddy" languish in leisure in a warehouse for distribution of "shoddy" goods. Finally, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* implied that Rabbi Wise, who had declined the Democratic nomination for state senator, could have run on the other ticket with the help of "the Shoddy contractors."⁵¹ (Figure 6)

In 1864, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* described camp followers who, "in these days of conscription," shadowed the army to "avoid the draft."⁵² Because camp followers were often associated with profiteering and "shoddy," this was an added dimension to the stereotype of disloyalty. The illustrator chose to select a Jewish figure as the representative camp follower.⁵³ The customary watch chain, the

47. Morford, *Days of Shoddy*, p. 477.

48. Ibid., pp. 182, 218. That individual Jews (or Christians) succumbed to the temptation of "shoddy" behavior is not contested; it was the generalization to a class of people that was offensive.

49. For the first reference, see *Vanity Fair*, 4 January 1862, 5. Both illustrations appear in *Pictorial History of the Southern Rebellion*, Providence Public Library, Vol. 3, p. 131.

50. *Harper's Weekly*, 24 October 1863, 677.

51. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 11 September 1863 in Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, p. 43.

52. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 23 January 1864, 283.

53. Ibid., 284.



Figure 5. "Service and Shoddy." Courtesy of Providence Public Library.



Figure 6. "The Army of the Mississippi." Courtesy of Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

bejeweled tie, the gesturing hands, and the overall appearance fit the Jewish stereotype used by cartoonists to convey ethnic identification. What precipitated the illustration were the orders submitted by Generals Sherman and McPherson to arrest any camp followers who did not have passes and to induct them into the army.⁵⁴

In the spring, illustrators intensified the campaign of anti-Semitism (Figure 7). "Shoddy or the Vulture of the Camp" was now unmistakably Jewish.⁵⁵ The vulture imagery was as popular south of the Mason and Dixon line as it was north of it. *The Richmond Examiner* wrote

54. For evidence of General Sherman's anti-Semitism, see Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, pp. 148–149. About the same time, *Harper's Weekly* kept ethnicity salient by announcing the capture of "twenty-two rebels . . . five Jews [and] ninety-nine Negroes." *Harper's Weekly*, 6 February 1864, 83.

55. *Budget of Fun*, April 1864, 5.



Shoddy, or the Vulture of the Camp.

Figure 7. "Shoddy, or the Vulture of the Camp." Courtesy of Library of Congress.

that Jews "flocked as vultures to every point of gain."⁵⁶ But "shoddy" was the preeminent image.⁵⁷ A serialized epic poem, appearing in multiple numbers of *Budget of Fun*, reinforced the Jewish connection with "shoddy."⁵⁸ In May, the second segment of the poem, "The Adventures of the Shoddy Family," identified the home base as, of course, Chatham Street.

Shoddy was 'Snobby,' and Chatham street air
Never wafted to Madison Square.⁵⁹

But the hub of the poem revolved around "Shoddy," the Jewish tailor and political subversive (Figure 8). An illustration on the same page as the poem entitled "Mr. Shoddy's way of Treating the Destitute" revealed just how Mr. Shoddy would fare in the poem. The cartoon pictures Mr. Shoddy as utterly calloused and insensitive to the needs of the poor. That same moral indifference is reflected in an early verse of the poem under the heading "The New Method of Bleeding—Shoddy's Patent":

Upon the new system (Oh! let us adore it)
Of bleeding the country, but not bleeding for it!
"For surely," said Shoddy, wise-shaking his head,
"Tis better by far thus to bleed than be bled;
Let men be as brave and as bold as they can—
A tailor is but the ninth part of a man,
And therefore, of course, should make money for nine—
Let others be men, be the tailor's part mine."

Later, a verse developed the idea of an aspiring Shoddy:

No Shoddy, the tailor, began to aspire,
A capital thief, an astonishing liar,
He glowed with a rogue's and a patriot's fire.
"Hurrah," thus he cried, "for the glorious flag!
Hurrah for the money that's made out of rag!
Hurrah for the stripes and hurrah for the stars!

56. *Richmond Examiner*, 15 January 1863 and 20 December 1862, in Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin*, pp. 200–201.

57. One magazine article conceded that Jews "have always been precursors of commercial greatness" and that "the Christian world has been especially hard upon the Hebrew," but the overall tone of the piece was ambivalent at best. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 30 April 1864, 82.

58. The serial poem "The Adventures of the Shoddy Family" first appeared in *Budget of Fun*, April 1864, 5.

59. *Budget of Fun*, May 1864, p. 5.



"THE ADVENTURES OF THE SHODDY FAMILY."—*Mr. Shoddy's way of treating the destitute.*

Figure 8. "The Adventures of the Shoddy Family." Courtesy of University of Chicago.

Hurrah for the fools who must go to the wars!
I stay at my home, yet, as heaven well knows,
I'm making more money than any who goes—
For each one who goes to the war must be clad
With a garment of mine, be it good, be it bad!"

Further, on the theme of "How the Death of a Customer May Sometimes be of Advantage to a Tailor," the poet wrote:

If th' garment gives way, why, it matters me not—
A soldier can never complain when he's shot.
Death shielded the doctor from sceptic and railer,
And bullets will do much the same for a tailor!
So Shoddy extended his trade and began.
To be known by the world as a "rising, rich man."

In much the same way, the poet maligned Mrs. Shoddy as a crude, vulgar, upwardly mobile counterpart to her husband. As Mrs. Shoddy enters Tiffany's looking for diamonds, doggerel describes her central features (Figure 9):

There enters a woman, she's ugly and course,
As stout as an ox and as tall as a horse;
She's red in the face and amazing in dress,
More vulgar by far than all words can express.

In the same issue of *Budget of Fun*, an artist pits the unrefined Mrs. Shoddy against other women who symbolize the respectable professions of "Commerce," "Science," and "Art," respectively.⁶⁰

If another drop in gold prices and the stock market had triggered the most recent episode of anti-Semitism,⁶¹ the grinding, frustrating stalemate in the Civil War also set nerves on edge. Whatever the complex causal forces, neither June nor July was a good month for Jews (Figure 10). It was no honor for Jews to be featured on the front page of *Budget of Fun*.⁶² "Mr. Shoddy wants to kill the bird [the American eagle] that lays all the golden eggs," exclaimed the front page caption. One of the golden eggs was labeled "a fat contract." This "bogus speculation," declared the cartoon, was "The Height of Madness." Thus the powerful editorial cartoon had reduced Jews to the convenient status of scapegoat.

An equal dose of anti-Semitism was fed to the readers of *Frank*

60. *Budget of Fun*, p. 16.

61. "Gold in New York," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 7 May 1864, 103. See illustration, including Jews in the lower right-hand corner on pp. 104–105.

62. *Budget of Fun*, June 1864, front page.



Figure 9. "An Everyday Scene Everywhere." Courtesy of University of Chicago.

Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper. "Oh, horror! This year, whoso goeth down into the sea shore or elsewhere will be perpetually and irretrievably afflicted with Shoddy. Shoddy pere, Shoddy mere, and Mesdemoiselles Shoddy, the daughters, to say nothing of the worst of the lot, the youthful masculine scions of the House of Shoddy. . . . You will find them . . . trailing robes and glittering bracelets . . . and Mr. Shoddy will jingle his massive chain . . . And Mrs Shoddy, in . . . diamond ear-rings, will exclaim: 'This here coffee ain't fit for nothin'; And Miss Shoddy . . . will make a dead set at your young brother . . . And young Shoddy will . . . drive you to the verge of desperation."⁶³ "You need not say you will not mix with such people," so avoidance was the only prac-

63. "Out of Town," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 4 June 1864, 163.



Figure 10. "The Height of Madness." Private Collection.

tical solution. "If you desire to escape Shoddy (and who would not?) you must make up your mind to farmhouses and rustic hotels, and abjure, for this season at least, Saratoga, Newport, Trenton Falls, Lake George etc.; and making a merit of necessity, enjoy the 'real country' for once in your life. You will not lose by it." (Figure 11)

One week later, the *New York Illustrated News* picked up where the *Budget of Fun* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* left off. The anti-Semitism was just as spirited and robust. Dressed in the trappings of the "Anti-Silk Movement," "Shoddy," noted the caption, was "left alone in its glory."⁶⁴ An accompanying textual description explained the meaning of the cartoon:

Our picture with the above title exhibits Queen Fashion as she has lately appeared, clad as usual with all the taste of a lady, but not in the costly material of silk and satin she has been wont to wear. She will be seen seated in the aerial region, at the top of the engraving, surrounded by her attendants. These little Cupids are on the one side engaged in driving off the foreign merchants who come laden with luxuries, that in these times of fierce toil and strife are more than useless. With the means accruing from the savings thus made, good things are showered upon the sick and wounded in the hospitals, as is shown on the other side of the drawing. On the left a disciple of the praiseworthy queen is receiving homage from a new list of adorers—no brainless fops, possessed merely of wealth and the capacity to spend, but men of heart and virtue, of science and art, the intellect of the land. The Queen of Fashion declares herself the queen of sense and sensibility. But one dissentient voice is heard. Shoddy spreads her ample skirts and comes rustling to the front. Her Jewish features are contorted with irate emotions as she surveys the good work about her. In her hand she holds a document, "What Mrs Lincoln says." What did Mrs. Lincoln say when she was requested to join the movement?"⁶⁵

During July, the *New York Illustrated News* turned the vise a notch tighter on Shoddy. A double-page illustration, celebrating Independence Day, displayed a series of patriotic images and lobbied for the presidential candidacy of McClelland over the incumbent Lincoln. On the one hand, McClelland is shown riding on the back of the American eagle, ascending gracefully to the White House. On the other hand, Lincoln falls toward defeat in the symbolic waters of Salt River. Predictably, the sole exception to the patriotic imagery is the inclusion of "Shoddy consumed in extravagance."⁶⁶ (Figure 12) Two weeks later, one of the final wartime Shoddy cartoons portrays Shoddy wondering

64. *New York Illustrated News*, 11 June 1864, p. 520.

65. *Ibid.*, 516.

66. *New York Illustrated News*, 9 July 1864, 584–585.



Figure 11. "The Anti-Silk Movement." Courtesy of Providence Public Library.



Figure 12. "Onions for the Soldiers." Courtesy of University of Kentucky at Lexington.

"if there isn't a chance for a little spec. here" in contracting for "onions for the soldiers."⁶⁷ As the pungent aroma from the onions draws tears from Shoddy, his insincerity is also exposed: "Onions for the soldiers, eh? Dear me! its quite affecting."⁶⁸

Just as suddenly as shoddy had emerged in the early months of the war, so it faded at the end. As Sherman occupied Atlanta and drove to the sea, generals Grant and Sheridan routed their foes, and Lincoln was

67. *New York Illustrated News*, 23 July 1864, 624.

68. Again the large watch chain and other subtle clues, such as the ostentatious dress of Mrs. Shoddy, are the nexus for anti-Semitism.

reelected for a second term, the end of the conflagration was now in sight. Battlefield success had removed the venom of Copperheadism in the North and diffused a pall of gloom over the South. That same northern surge of optimism set a limit on the days of shoddy. Because shoddy was conceived and nurtured by the exigencies of war, the motives sustaining the anti-Semitic variant of shoddy rapidly diminished in strength as the surrender at Appomattox drew near. Happily, only a few remnants of the shoddy legacy survived the Civil War.⁶⁹

At first glance, it is surprising that the fine scholarship on the Civil War and anti-Semitism has virtually ignored the concept of "shoddy."⁷⁰ Yet the omission is understandable because the idea was unobtrusively buried in the cartoon genre of the popular culture. Only by considering illustrations as primary sources were we able to uncover the significance of "shoddy" as a tool of anti-Semitism. Scattered references to "shoddy" did, indeed, appear in various written sources. However, it was the salience of "shoddy" in illustrations that spurred us on to look more carefully, widely, and assiduously for the pattern that eventually emerged. For us, this experience—from the often unpredictable odyssey of research—underscores the axiom that historians can ill afford to ignore or underestimate the significance of any obscure primary source as a clue in the investigative or interpretive process. In this case, the popular print category proved invaluable.

On the central issue of the relative importance of anti-Semitism during the period, we disagree with two fundamental arguments in David A. Gerber's recent analysis.⁷¹ First, he asserts that "there is little evidence that the common types of prejudice . . . increased significantly during the Civil War."⁷² As an index of prejudice, Gerber uses "the appearance in literature, drama, art, and various facets of popular culture,

69. The title "Shody [*sic*] goods" does appear in a few early twentieth-century anti-Semitic valentine post cards. Yet "Shoddy" refers to the quality of the tailor's product, and does not have the same meaning as the Civil War connotation. For examples of these valentine post cards, see the private collection of John and Selma Appel.

70. Although the word "shoddy" is not indexed in Bertram Wallace Korn's *American Jewry and the Civil War*, the concept is included, for example, in an allusion to "shoddy contractors" on p. 43.

71. David A. Gerber, "Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past," in *Anti-Semitism in American History* ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana and Chicago, 1986).

72. *Ibid.*, 21. Gerber also argued "that there is little evidence that . . . discrimination and harassment increased significantly during the Civil War." Although our research does not focus on discrimination or harassment, an increase in prejudice generally paves the way for the more overt behavioral manifestations of anti-Semitism. If the evidence is lack-

such as cartoons, of negative imagery and stereotypes; or the informal verbalization of such negative views of Jews."⁷³ Our study explicitly addresses the degree of prejudice in the popular culture. Contrary to Gerber's thesis, we found significant changes in the frequency, prominence, and intensity of prejudice in the cartoons of the popular culture. Neither the antebellum or reconstruction era produced as malevolent, common, or conspicuous images of Jews. Typically, these cartoons were not buried in some remote corner of an illustrated periodical—rather, many were displayed prominently as front-, full-, half-, or even double-page spreads, and generally the tone was harsh and hostile.

Second, we differ with Gerber in his characterization of "ordinary anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century as a gradually broadening stream."⁷⁴ The substantial rise of anti-Semitism during the war and the rapid decline after the war do not fit a linear developmental model. Historically, war has not been kind to the treatment or image of Jews. The Civil War was no exception; it was not a minor eddy in the broadening stream. For some Americans, the dynamic climate of war transformed latent propensities for anti-Semitism into manifest realities of contempt and scapegoating. That anti-Semitism declined after the Civil War does not render its temporary status inconsequential.⁷⁵

However, we also acknowledge the concurrent existence of causal factors which suppress as well as sponsor anti-Semitism. Our model of anti-Semitism takes these countervailing forces into consideration. For any significant degree of anti-Semitism to occur, two general conditions

ing with respect to acts of discrimination, significant attempts to discriminate were not. The controversies over the justification for Jewish chaplains and the general order of U. S. Grant are cases in point. That a presidential order was required to set these decisions aside argues at least for the genuine threat of increased discrimination. Furthermore, had Lincoln not then occupied the White House, favorable executive action may not have occurred.

73. Ibid., 20.

74. Although this is not a central issue for us, we do find some conceptual problem with defining any kind of anti-Semitism as "ordinary." While Gerber has carefully linked his definition of "ordinary" with specific conceptual referents, there is a temptation for the reader to think of the word "ordinary" euphemistically (i.e., as benign or inconsequential). We believe that Gerber does not intend that connotation. However, the common usage of the word may vitiate the intentional meaning.

75. Gerber appears to minimize Civil War anti-Semitism. "Because the brief Civil War experience of Jew-baiting by public officials failed to survive the war, analysis of the development of ideological anti-semitism and its political manifestations and of the breakdown of the usual moral, political, and cultural sanctions against the acceptance of anti-Semitic views among growing sectors of the population is best restricted to the period 1890 to 1950." Gerber, *Anti-Semitism in American History*, p. 29.

must be met. First, anti-Semitism must be rationalized; second, significant sectors of power must support its expression. We have already argued that the economic and political tensions and frustrations of war magnified the salience of ethnocentrism, popular stereotypes, and Jewish visibility. Hence the perception that Jews as a class represented a threat to the outcome of war was easier to rationalize. Then, when certain pockets of power in the military, the media, and elsewhere promoted anti-Semitism, the social problem increased.

On the other hand, to the extent that individuals with more enlightened values attacked the rationalization of anti-Semitism, or individuals in power restrained its overt manifestation, some forms of intolerance diminished. When a unified Jewish community appealed to a sensitive Abraham Lincoln to redress obvious grievances, as noted earlier, equalitarian, pluralistic, and democratic values neutralized the anti-Semitism associated with the policy on Jewish chaplains and U.S. Grant's order to exclude Jews from his district. As president, Lincoln was influential both as an opinion leader and power broker.

Yet if Lincoln's benign influence generalized to other forms of anti-Semitism, the effects are less discernible. Lincoln's rejection of anti-Semitic military policies did not extend to the civilian sphere and did not prevent anti-Semitic actions by some of his generals.⁷⁶ In the media, the theme of "shoddy," the purported manipulation of financial institutions, the alleged subversive complicity with the Confederacy, the supposed exploitation of military personnel by Jewish camp followers, and the claims of foreign intervention against the interests of the North continued unabated to plague the image of Jews. However effective the democratic restraints may have been, the rhetoric of anti-Semitism enjoyed the sanction of major illustrated periodicals throughout the duration of the war including, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, *The New York Illustrated News*, and the comic press.

Although our study revolves around the relatively unexplored concept of "shoddy," the role of popular prints in the expression and documentation of prejudice, and the reaffirmation of the Civil War as a catalyst for anti-Semitism, our perception of the causes that support and suppress anti-Semitism agrees fundamentally with Jonathan Sarna's thesis of ambivalence.⁷⁷ Sarna portrayed the period as a contest between democratic and antidemocratic elements. Although we attack the prob-

76. Korn, *American Jewry and Civil War*, pp. 148-150, 154-155.

77. Sarna, *Commentary*, March 1981, p. 44.

lem differently than does Bertram Korn, our research also views the Civil War version of anti-Semitism as a potent strain.

Ironically, more than 30 years after the Civil War, the issue of Jewish loyalty was still hotly debated. At that time, Mark Twain attempted to bury the "common reproach" by recourse to "figures from the War Department."⁷⁸ "This slur upon the Jew," wrote Twain, "has done its work, and done it long and faithfully, and with high approval: it ought to be pensioned off now, and retired from active service." Lamentably, the retirement was only temporary.⁷⁹

78. "Concerning the Jews," *Harper's Monthly*, September 1898. The background of this issue, along with the full reproduction of the above cited article, appears in Mark Twain, *Concerning the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1985).

79. For a refurbished version of the negative image, see "The Modern War God," *Puck*, 25 January 1905, front page. Of course the full-blown fury of such beliefs manifested itself more recently and fully in the holocaust.