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Ulysses S. Grant In Popular Memory / Jewish Quotas At Elite Universities

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Ulysses S. Grant in Popular Memory/Jewish Quotas at Elite Universities

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Bachelor of Arts., College of William & Mary, 2020

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
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Master of Arts

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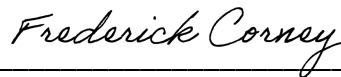
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Shea Simmons

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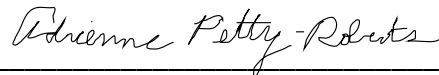


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ABSTRACT

The Journey of Ulysses S. Grant in Popular History from The 1880s to The Early 1930s

The time period from the 1880s (beginning shortly after his death) to the 1930s was crucial in regards to the popular memory of general and president Ulysses S. Grant. Accessible writings made available both to the public and historians cemented his image among informed readers as an incompetent president and simple-minded general. These included biographies, novels, popular histories and even academic writings, many taking heed of the Dunning School of thought in regards to Reconstruction. Through tracing his journey in popular memory, it becomes clear that many characterizations of Grant owed more to political agendas and beliefs of the time than accuracy in regards to how they treated Grant. Many in the North lost interest in the Civil War and allowed the history surrounding Grant to be written by those who sought to categorize his pursuit of Reconstruction as a failure and those who wished to redeem Confederate losses in battle.

Wealth and David: Jewish Quotas At Elite Universities

From the early 1900s to the 1950s, elite universities often enforced unofficial quotas on the amount of Jewish students they admitted. Though this was not publicized at the time, potential students were often screened through entrance exams or character questions. Harvard, Princeton and Yale were three particularly notable culprits of this policy. This policy both maintained and was formed by stereotypes of Jewish students, which one can glean through campus newspapers and materials. The exclusion of Jewish students through quotas and through behavior on campus reinforced a world where access to wealth through these elite colleges was safeguarded to only the right amount of people. Discrimination was and still is tightly linked with both elite schools and with the way they feed into capitalism.

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Finally, she wishes to thank her family and her friends for their support during the school year. She never would have made it this far without her mom, dad, brother, and dog.

Intellectual Biography

By Shea Simmons

My two research papers comprise two vastly different subject matters. One “Grant in Popular History From the 1880s to the Early 1930s” looks at the historical memory of Ulysses S. Grant, tracing my way through popular history to look at how his image evolved in American culture. My second one “Jewish Quotas at Elite Universities” wanted to survey Jewish quotas at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale and how they affected perceptions of Jewish students. However, both papers are well-suited to the line of history that I’m interested in and want to ultimately work in. As someone geared towards public history, being able to look at the ways in which history influences the public and how we see certain things really influenced how I chose my topics and ended up writing my papers. They both rely on eschewing the truth as historians or people of the day saw it and instead learning to parse through people’s biases in order to outline how perception influenced reality.

My first paper “The Miseducation of Ulysses S. Grant: Grant in Popular History From the 1880s to the Early 1930s” came about after some twists and turns. I knew that the topic I would have to choose would be in the Civil War era since that was the research class I was taking. I initially was thinking that my research paper in the fall of 2020 would be about slavery and free black women’s experiences in the anti-bellum south. However, there were several obstacles to that plan: one of the biggest was the coronavirus making it difficult to access any archives that weren’t digital. Though it would have been a worthy topic and I was considering several different sources such as memoirs, I decided to pivot to something that might have a little more scholarship online.

I have always had an interest in Grant ever since reading a biography of him when I was younger and have always thought that his journey through memory was interesting. Memory of certain figures of the Civil War has always been illuminating in regards to the period as a whole and Grant is no exception. Though the memory of Ulysses S. Grant is not an un-trafficked topic (one example being a book by Joan Waugh), I noticed that there seemed to be some gaps in the scholarship regarding time periods and particular types of writings. Less attention seemed to be paid to numerous writings on Ulysses S. Grant starting after his death and stretching into the 1930s though this was an important and fruitful time for public perception on Grant. Additionally, the main source of these writings on Grant, popular history geared towards the general public rather than academic historians, also seems to have been under-researched. I decided then to have my research paper focus on several of these popular histories and trace how they portrayed Grant, noting the continuities and changes as time went along.

The popular histories I used fell into several different schools of thought: The Lost Cause narrative of the 1880s, the Dunning School of the early 1900s, the popular novel that influenced *The Birth of A Nation* and then the popular history that bashed Reconstruction, biographies on Grant, Northern newspaper publications. Each of these works laid a groundwork for the perception of Grant as it changed from mostly positive in 1885 when he died to largely negative in the 1930s where we was seen as a simple-minded butcher of a general and a terrible president. Through structuring my paper chronologically, I was able to note the shift but also the nuances in how Grant was seen both positively and negatively. Overall, I found myself fascinated by the agendas and biases of the current day being played out in how these various works chose to categorize Grant.

Ultimately, Grant's journey through popular history shows what happens when certain people get to take hold of a narrative. Confederate-sympathizing Southerners and white supremacists were able to paint his legacy a certain way because it fit their goals of portraying his presidency, the Union cause, and Reconstruction as a failure. The North's attitude towards Grant was often marked by disinterest in the early 1900s as they let the South do most of the research and re-created many of the conceptions the South propagated in their own writings. Biographies of Grant by Northerners often borrowed much from Lost Causers and Dunning School acolytes. Dunning himself was a Northerner who sought to portray Reconstruction in a certain way in order to uphold white supremacy and lash back against a burgeoning Civil Rights movement at the time. The figure they portray Grant as tells us just as much about the authors as it does about Grant himself and that was a dichotomy that fascinated me.

My second paper, "Wealth and David: Jewish Quotas at Elite Universities" was a topic that I decided on relatively early in the course, particularly since in this case, I needed another topic that I could access with digital archives. My dad's family is Jewish and I thought that Jewish people in America provide an interesting case study in regards to wealth and inequality (hence the title of the course!) I also have been interested in colleges and how they connect to wealth in American society, especially since that's a topic that seems to have become more and more important in recent years. The USC admissions scandal, numerous talks about whether or not college should be free, student loan debt... all are pertinent and fascinating discussions today that really influenced me to decide to make that a cornerstone of my paper.

In this case, I started with secondary documents rather than primary ones because I needed to situate myself in hard facts about the quotas before I moved into researching the way they were seen and used during the time. In some ways, I had challenges with balancing the

research of a research paper and cataloguing the facts as well as providing background. I am still a bit worried that I detailed more than I analyzed. I also struggled a bit with finding primary sources. I initially thought that I would use memoirs and records from the time but had a hard time accessing them digitally and also could not get into contact easily with any of the archivists at the three schools I chose to focus on: Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. I ultimately chose to use student newspapers as my primary database and though I'm happy with the results they yielded, I do wish I could have had access to non-digital archives in this case. More than my Ulysses S. Grant paper, I feel that they would have made a difference.

Using the student newspapers for my primary sources forced me to conceptualize the Jewish quotas as something that was perceived. There was a symbiotic relationship between sub-conscious biases reflected in the ways Jewish students were written about and the conscious discrimination happening at the universities at the time. This led the paper to be about perceptions of Jewish people and also perceptions of wealth.

Through writing these two papers, I think I have broadened myself as a historian and certainly have gained a new appreciation for the task of separating the source from the person who wrote it. I don't see history as static facts anymore but rather as a living, breathing discourse. It's constantly evolving and changing depending on popular sentiments of when it's being written. Each of these papers have taught me how to engage with primary documents more critically and also how to parse which sources will be most useful for a paper. I am hoping that the topic of memory will be something I continue to explore in my future career as a public historian. This certainly has taught me all the diverse ways it could be useful.

The Journey of Ulysses S. Grant in Popular History From the 1880s to the Early

1930s

By Shea Simmons

Introduction:

When Ulysses S. Grant died in 1885, according to historian Joan Waugh, he was widely mourned and celebrated as a great American hero.¹ Though the Lost Cause movement had certainly tarnished his name in some areas, Waugh claims the widespread view of him in ordinary circles was positive and sincere.² That reputation would go through ups and downs in the century and a half that followed. While it would be easy to assume that his reputation rapidly declined and was mostly denigrated in the historiography of the Civil War, that in fact was not true. Grant, from 1900 to 1940, would become a symbol of many things-- of a failing Reconstruction, a faceless and massive Union Army, a reconciled North and South, a man of peace, a soldier, a failed politician, whatever the writer wanted him to be. Instead of a person, he was shaved down to a few essential traits (both positive and negative) or often erased entirely, in comparison to the more romantic Southern figures. Just as important to the story of Grant's public image is the gaps and the aspects about his life not written about. Disinterest marks much of Grant's journey in popular history, as the cause and region he fought for moved on to new concerns. The North largely stopped writing about Grant and let Southern writers recast his image in popular history.

¹ Joan Waugh, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, Accessed September 8, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807898710_waugh, pp. 235 You need to use proper *Chicago* Notes-Bibliography style.

² Waugh, *Grant*, pp. 10.

In tracing the popular history of Grant, I have chosen to focus on key works from roughly the time of Grant's death in 1885 to the late 1930s. These works were all generally read by a wider audience than just scholarly historians or were influential on works that would attract the general public. In some ways, this paper is attempting to plug the gap between academic history and popular memory, proposing that these published works below helped both to advance a historical school of thought and to attract a more diverse readership on the Civil War. They are organized mostly chronologically by when they were published.

Lost Cause

Much of the foundation for Grant's reputation declining in popular history was laid in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, when he was still alive. This aligned what historians often refer to as the "Lost Cause" movement.³ Disgruntled ex-Confederates such as former general Jubal Early sought to reframe the war as a valiant struggle between outgunned and outnumbered Confederates vs. a never-ending Union Army, flush with resources and manpower.⁴ They were not defeated because the North was superior but simply bludgeoned into submission. The Confederate leaders were romantic and dashing. The Union leaders were colorless, incompetent, and, depending on the severity of the attack, brutal criminals.

Grant's generalship and presidency were not only criticized by his foes but by his peers, disgruntled by military politics and angry at Grant for perceived slights. One example is Gouverneur Warren, a general who served under Grant during the war, who criticized both Grant

³ Grace Elizabeth Hale, "The Lost Cause and the Meaning of History." *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 1 (2013): 13-17. Accessed October 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23489628>.

⁴ Brooks D. Simpson, "Continuous Hammering and Mere Attrition: Lost Cause Critics and the Military Reputation of Ulysses S. Grant," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, edited by Gallagher Gary W. and Nolan Alan T, 147-69, Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000, Accessed September 8, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzbp2.10>, pp. 115

and Sheridan for his treatment in the Union Army.⁵ These critical voices could come from memoirs, newspaper articles, commemoration speeches, or essays. They were not limited to historians but were instead an active discourse, particularly in the late 1800s.⁶

Brooks D. Simpson argues that “perhaps the first book that set forth the Confederate case against the generalship of Ulysses S. Grant was Edward A. Pollard’s *The Lost Cause*.”⁷ Other Confederate veterans quickly fell in line from Richard Taylor to Dabney H. Maury to Jubal Early, who was perhaps the most virulent proponent of Grant’s military failures. Speaking both at events and to newspapers, Early claimed that it was only Grant’s “unlimited resources” that allowed him to win.⁸

Grant certainly had his own defenders at the time. Vicious debates about specific campaigns and how Grant had waged them prompted one of Grant’s aides to respond. The critics alleged that Grant was a butcher and killer of men, focusing in particular on his bloody defeat at Cold Harbor. The aide fired back, claiming that Grant had been forced into a corner and had done the best he could. In general, however, Grant was quiet about his military career, only occasionally giving his thoughts on Confederate and other Union generals.⁹

Memoirs:

Grant’s image was not only molded by others during this period. Grant sought to illustrate and frame his career in his own terms. Grant both created his own lasting historical

⁵ David M Jordan, *"Happiness Is Not My Companion": The Life of General G. K. Warren*. Indiana University Press, 2001. Accessed November 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18crz28>, pp. 244.

⁶ Simpson, "Continuous Hammering," 117.

⁷ Simpson, "Continuous Hammering," 120

⁸ Simpson, "Continuous Hammering," 125.

⁹ Simpson, "Continuous Hammering," 130.

image and subtly addressed the critiques of others when he published his *Memoirs* in 1885, working rapidly against his own impending death from lung cancer. One historian, Frank Varney, believes that he twisted different narratives to make himself look better than fellow Union generals. Indeed, Varney claims that Grant did not merely exaggerate some events to make himself look better and others worse but came up with wholesale inventions. At the time, these *Memoirs* were widely read and praised as objective however, with little to no criticism of any inaccuracies.¹⁰

Grant strove to portray himself as a patriotic man, claiming that “[his] family [was] American, and has been for generations, in all its branches, direct and collateral.”¹¹ Much emphasis was laid on his simple background and his long career of military service. He was a soldier, striving to hold together the country he loved. He believed that the Confederate cause was “one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse,” though perhaps mindful of that cause’s rabid defenders, he was careful to praise Lee as “a man of much dignity,” and “handsomely dressed” during the surrender ceremony.¹²

Grant did at times strike a defensive tone about his leadership. One example is when he claimed that “my later experience has taught me...lessons...that the most confident critics are generally those who know the least about the matter criticized.” This would not be the only time Grant lashed out at his critics. Perhaps smarting at the comparisons between himself and Lee, Grant told a reporter shortly before leaving the presidency that he had never ranked Lee as high

¹⁰ John Marszalek, “Personal Memoirs of US Grant,” *New York Times*, NY, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/13/books/review/john-marszalek-personal-memoirs-of-ulysses-s-grant.html>

¹¹ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*. New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1885–1886

¹² Grant, *Memoirs*, 90.

as some others of the army. He claimed that he “had never had as much anxiety when he was in my front as when Joe Johnston [fellow Confederate general] was in front.”¹³

He defended the controversial aspects of his military record, such as the Battle of Shiloh. Joan Waugh claims that Grant “never wavered on his larger truth of Shiloh,” which was that Shiloh was the making of the Western armies and also proof that the Union needed to bear as many arms as it could against the Confederates.¹⁴ Grant claimed that contrary to newspaper reports, he was not surprised that morning at Shiloh and was active all over the field “staving off disaster.”¹⁵ His narration of these events are generally straightforward but subtly complimentary.

In a similar vein, his siege and ultimate capture of Vicksburg is painted as extremely important in the larger scheme of the war. In the beginning of his passage on it, Grant stresses that Vicksburg “occupied the first high ground coming close to the river below Memphis,” being the only Confederate stronghold that connected the two sides of the Confederacy through the Mississippi.¹⁶ Vicksburg occupies a great portion of the book, as Grant details his triumph and his efforts to take the city. When he managed to take it, the Civil War reached a turning point.

In general, the book also addresses a growing Lost Cause narrative that the Union army was a faceless mass of people through its focus on command personalities and its generous credit attributed to Grant’s favorite generals (such as Sherman and Sheridan). Though Grant could certainly be tough on others, there’s a romanticism and camaraderie to his descriptions, a cozy

¹³ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: November 1, 1876-September 30, 1878*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2005, pp. 205

¹⁴ Joan Waugh, *Personal Memoirs of US Grant: A History of The Union Cause*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press 2003, pp. 101.

¹⁵ Grant, *Memoirs*, 201.

¹⁶ Grant, *Memoirs*, 332.

teamwork of different individuals working in tandem, that belies the brutal and colorless image of Union generals that became popular in certain circles. Some Southern writers portrayed Union Generals as talentless butchers, who relied on superior manpower to win the day. Others ignored individual contribution and mostly focused on Union political figures, like Abraham Lincoln.

Grant was willing to admit to mistakes but did couch them in terms that were generally favorable to him. He claimed that he had “always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made. I might say the same thing of the assault of the 22d of May, 1863, at Vicksburg. At Cold Harbor no advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained. Indeed, the advantages other than those of relative losses, were on the Confederate side.” He followed that, however, with affirming that most of his other losses had been justified with considerable benefits, making sure to note that “before [Cold Harbor], the Army of Northern Virginia seemed to have acquired a wholesome regard for the courage, endurance, and soldierly qualities generally of the Army of the Potomac.”¹⁷

In general, the memoirs of Grant are a triumphant narrative. They end before his presidency and the battle of Reconstruction that happened under his administration. They paint Grant as a victor in no uncertain terms, decisively framing each battle as a series of clear actions by a steady leader. Grant’s version of events is disarming in its apparent simplicity but also reflect Grant’s decisively taking hold of his own image. In some ways, the traits Grant used to paint himself-- honorable, single-minded, dogmatic, simple-- would be used by later scholars seeking to discredit him. Grant’s later biographers would also focus on his political career rather than his military one.

¹⁷ Grant, *Memoirs*, 500.

Dunning School/Dunning

John David Smith writes that “in 1916 the historian Arthur C. Cole of the University of Illinois noted the emergence of what he termed the new “southern school of historians.” They were “historical students of southern birth and breeding” and “representatives of the new south,” but had “migrated northward to the classroom of a northern guide and philosopher to receive words of wisdom and inspiration.”¹⁸ They rewrote the way we conceptualize the Civil War, including Reconstruction, into the study of the time period and stressing a structural oppression of the South, spurred on by an incompetent and angry North. This was called the Dunning School.

The Dunning School was a particular school of academic history, named after William Dunning, who taught and oversaw many of these students in the early 1900s. It coincided with a particular time, when academic historians began to take themselves seriously and regard themselves as different than “popular historians.”¹⁹ However, the Dunning School would inform popular conceptions of the Civil War, weaving itself into extremely well-read and well-seen pieces of media.

The Dunning School, and its historians, did not have personal animosity towards Grant, unlike the various proponents of the Lost Cause in the 1870s and 1880s. They were less interested in military matters of the Civil War itself since they were one generation now removed from it. Instead, they turned their attention to the Southern personalities of the Reconstruction

¹⁸ Eric Foner, *The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction*. Edited by Smith John David and Lowery J. Vincent. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2013. Accessed September 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt4cgsj9, pp. 4

¹⁹ Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: facts, fictions, and fraud--American history from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin*, New York: Public Affairs, 2007, pp. 150

era, choosing to focus on heroic Southern whites vs. shiftless “Negroes” and evil Republicans. They were part of a general wave of Civil War historians who now regarded Reconstruction as part of the Civil War era, rather than separate.

They were operating in a general atmosphere of burgeoning white supremacy. In a review of a book on the Dunning School, Adam Fairclough claims that “by 1898—before the work of the Dunning School had seen the light of day—the Supreme Court had already endorsed Jim Crow laws and permitted Mississippi to disfranchise its black voters.”²⁰ A new era of white domination in the South had begun. Dunningites were reactionaries to their current climate as much as they were shapers and influencers.

Grant died in 1885. William A. Dunning’s first group of essays was published in 1897. Dunning’s most influential piece *Reconstruction: Political and Economic* was read not just by other historians but also by people who would write popular history pieces, such as Claude G. Bowers. Very few biographies or books by 1907 had been written about Grant’s political career. Most biographies about Grant had focused on his military career, taking their lead from Grant himself, and it is the Dunningites who seem to plug in the gap, even if their focus was rarely on Grant himself.

The Grant administration plays a key antagonistic role in the Dunning School’s portrayal of Reconstruction, yet Grant himself is rarely villainized. Indeed, much of how they categorize Grant seems to be pulled from his memoirs. The way Dunning portrays Grant in his book is simple-minded, easily influenced, and not suited to politics. Dunning claims that Grant “strove conscientiously to follow the straight path of his military duty, but he could not fully understand

²⁰ Adam Fairclough, *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (2015): 258-61. Accessed November 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769185>, pp. 259.

the forces which were in conflict around him or elude the efforts of one side or the other to profit by the prestige of his name.”²¹ Grant was a soldier and a single-minded, tenacious man-- not skilled but American and down to earth.

The Grant in Dunning’s work is often barely a player. He is a pawn of the Radical Republicans and a hapless opportunist who only courted the “Negro” vote in order to keep his party in power. More pages in the work are dedicated to the scandals of various appointees Grant made than to the violence of the KKK. Indeed, Dunning claims that Congress spent too much time on the South and not enough time going after political corruption, which was nicknamed “Grantism- not without reason.”²² The tendency had been in the House, as it continued to be in the Senate, to expend most time and energy on the crimes of the whites and the sufferings of the blacks in the South.”

Dunning himself admits that Grant was probably clueless to the grifting and corruption going on in his administration. Dunning claims that Grant’s “weak judgement and almost infantile credulity had been exploited with great shrewdness.”²³ Grant is incompetent, not evil. Dunning has no personal antipathy towards him or need to tear him down individually, unlike Confederate commanders writing about the Lost Cause. Grant’s failings are part of a larger overall structure.

One element of Dunning’s work that is replicated in other works dealing with Grant is that the federal government and the president himself are less interesting than the people on the ground. Dunning has much more ire for Republican governors, Republican “carpetbaggers,” federal troops actually stationed in the South, and the Freedman’s Bureau. They are the ones

²¹ William Archibald Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, The American Nation: A History, V. 22. New York: Harper & Bros, 1907, pp. 249.

²² Dunning, *Reconstruction*, 282.

²³ Dunning, *Reconstruction*, 285.

blamed for violence and for the bad state in which Southern whites find themselves. Dunning claims that “this ever-present source of irritation [the KKK] came as an aggravation of the evils which by 1872 had in many places become intolerable, arising from the inefficiency, extravagance, and corruption of the radical southern state governments.”²⁴ Southern individuals are romantic and Republican individuals are evil while Grant and federal forces are faceless symbols of incompetence and grafting, not even worth the Dunningites’ ire.

The Clansman:

Grant’s faceless, colorless incompetence and naivety is seen in other works in the 1900 decade dealing with Reconstruction. *The Clansman*, which inspired *Birth of A Nation*, was published in 1905 by a novelist who made no purport to be a historian.²⁵ Nevertheless, the same perception of Reconstruction as found in the Dunning School is there. Grant is mentioned by name only a handful of times and rarely ascribed any agency in the horrible events plaguing the South. Grant is a “babe in the woods,” someone not suited for politics, while evil Republicans and evil black people run around subjugating innocent Southern civilians.²⁶ The Klan, in this case, is valorized as heroic individuals while Grant is again left to fade into the federal structural system of oppression, carried out by individuals in the South and not by the government in the North.

²⁴ Dunning, *Reconstruction*, 267.

²⁵ David E. Kyvig, "History as Present Politics: Claude Bowers' The Tragic Era." *Indiana Magazine of History* 73, no. 1 (1977): 17-31. Accessed November 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27790172>, pp. 16

²⁶ Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1970, Accessed November 20, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt5hjzbb, pp. 287

As an interesting aside, *Birth of A Nation*, while depicting Ulysses S. Grant, forgoes interest in him as a political figure and instead chooses to focus on him militarily, perhaps harkening back to Lost Cause discourse. Jay Carr claims that “for Griffith, war is associated with the aggressive North personified by the arrogant, cigar-smoking Ulysses S. Grant in the historical tableaux.”²⁷ Once the film begins to cover Reconstruction and leaves the Civil War era, the North ceases to matter besides Republican individuals and newly freed slaves encroaching on Southern honor. The KKK are the heroes now. The South can only rely on Southern individuals to save white Southern women.

Sometimes the idea of popular history becomes blurred by published novels (and even more by the films based on these novels). The two widely read novels, *The Clansman* (written in the same time period as Dunning published *Reconstruction*) and *Gone With The Wind* did not purport to scholarly accuracy nor were they written by authors who seem to have trafficked in the same spheres of Dunning. How much Dunning actually influenced these works is questionable. Nevertheless they (and *Birth of A Nation*/*Gone With The Wind* films) advance the same ideas that he did.

Gone With The Wind is perhaps still the most popular and enduring image of the time period. Building on decades of melding the Civil War and Reconstruction period together, *Gone With The Wind* is set during the Civil War’s beginnings, and ends about half through Reconstruction. Like *The Clansman*, it barely mentions Grant. Like the Dunning School and Lost Cause writers, it characterizes him as a meat-grinder and butcher, an incompetent president overseeing the corrupt regime. Most significantly, it characterizes Grant as irrelevant. He’s not nearly as important as the two main Southern protagonists. They get lines and screen-time: he

²⁷ Jay Carr, *100 Essential Films*, Da Capo Press, 2002, pp.153.

only receives vague mentions that never portray him in person. He represents a structure, not a person.

The Tragic Era:

The most widely read work about Reconstruction in the early 1900s was neither a novel, nor an academic history but instead a popular history. This was *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln*, published in 1929 and written by Claude G. Bowers. Bowers was heavily influenced by Dunning, citing him often in his bibliography.

Bowers was even more influenced by current political events in the South than Dunningites. Kyvig writes that “[a] recently discovered letter... not only confirms that Bowers intended to warn southerners about the dangers of Republicanism [with the publication of the Tragic Era],” it also offered “an unrelieved picture of Republican venality and flawed judgment in terms the white South was certain to recognize.”²⁸ The book was a call to arms for the 1920s Democratic party to strengthen the white stronghold over black people in the South, using history as both a mythology and a rallying cry.

Bowers wrote in considerably more vivid and simplified prose than Dunning had. “Bowers' colorful, fast paced, and dramatic writing style, produced a narrative which many found both compelling and convincing...reaching a much wider audience [than Dunning].”²⁹ Bowers was also considerably more strident than Dunning. Where Dunning was willing to admit the KKK was violent against black people (though spurred on by Republicans), Bowers claimed

²⁸ Kyvig, “History as Present Politics,” 20.

²⁹ Kyvig, “History as Present Politics,” 20.

that black people were not fit to vote at all and that measures taken against them were because they were lazy.

Bowers was not interested in Grant's military career, though he made mention of Sherman's and by proxy Grant's "war crimes" in their waging of total war in Georgia and the Carolinas.³⁰ He was barely more interested in Grant's political career. He had no malice towards Grant as an individual. In one circumstance, he was willing to defend Grant against charges of drunkenness from Radical Republicans. Grant was a symptom of a much greater enemy, the Republican party.

Much like Dunning, Bowers characterizes Grant as "simple," lacking affirmative qualities, an easy pawn of other men.³¹ His administration was marked by nepotism and corruption. People took advantage of him while he looked the other way. He's not a romantic or a dynamic figure. He's hapless and naïve compared to the evil Republican governors and Northern carpetbaggers.

Going further than Dunning, Bowers casts an even more cynical light on Grant and his administration's attempt to help freedmen. Grant is forging alliances with black people in order to get votes for his party and for no other reason. His displacement of the Ku Klux Klan is a harsh response to the "rising of the people" while he guards and protects freed black people, who will cast their ballots in his direction.³² Grant's own personal beliefs are negligible: he's another cog in the machine of the evil Republicans. The North and the freed black people are a faceless mass, parasitically relying on each other as they oppress helpless Southern whites.

³⁰ Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln*, Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929, pp. 54.

³¹ Bowers, *The Tragic Era*, 266.

³² Bowers, *The Tragic Era*, 457.

Through this time period, we can begin to formulate several different schools of thought that were occurring. One was that the South was creating its own mythology of the Civil War, building off the previous decades of Southern revisionism and apologia for losing the war. Another is that proponents of racism and Jim Crow saw the defense of slavery and the vilification of Reconstruction as important to their goals. Popular history was now interested in a structural defense of the South and its way of life. Much of the characterization of Grant is gleaned from Grant's own memoirs and biographies favorable to him. These writers aren't interested in tearing him down personally; they're barely interested in him at all. In an era fascinated by "great men," Grant is too hapless, gullible, simple-minded, and un-romantic to qualify.

An Interlude Into Northern Publications:

Meanwhile, in Northern popular memory, the Civil War was rapidly fading by the 1910s and 1920s. Veterans and their family members were dying while commemorative events dwindled. One *New York Times* article claimed that only 700 soldiers were able to show up for a memorial parade in 1914, and even fewer were able to march in it.³³ Only 500 were able to show up for Grant's birthday in 1929.³⁴

One marker of popular interest in both Grant and the Civil War was through visitation to Grant's tomb, constructed after he died and a popular spot for a while. Through the early 1900s to the 1920s, the memorial was a well-trafficked hang-out space and a luxurious reminder of

³³ "Cheers and Tears, Only 700 Old Soldiers" *New York Times* (New York, NY). May 14th, 1914. <https://www.nytimes.com/1914/05/31/archives/cheers-and-tears-for-thin-gar-line-only-700-old-soldiers-in.html?searchResultPosition=4->

³⁴ "500 in Rain Mark Birthday of Grant" *New York Times* (New York, NY). April 29th, 1929. <https://www.nytimes.com/1929/04/29/archives/500-in-rain-mark-birthday-of-grant-veterans-of-many-wars-join-in.html?searchResultPosition=15->

Grant's place in American history.³⁵ Beginning in the 1920s, the New York times advertised several different ads, seeking money for upkeep of the tomb.³⁶ In the 1930s, the tomb began to deteriorate, as fewer visitors were attracted to the site. The Great Depression meant that less money could be spared, and there was less interest in visiting the memorial. In 1935, a speech was given at the tomb bemoaning its general upkeep and lack of popularity for New York's tourists.³⁷

In many ways, the North seemed content to let Southerners rewrite the history of the war. Sometimes, such as in the case of Dunning, they joined forces with Southern scholars and propagated pro-South points of view.

One way of understanding Dunning's place, both as a Northerner and as an architect of the Dunning School, is understanding the Dunning School in a reconciliationist aspect. The reason Reconstruction failed is because it did not join together the two regions of the country well enough. The war in this time period was not about slavery but about the reunification of the Union.³⁸ This narrative is, however, complicated by African-American historians/writers, who continued to focus on black subjugation and liberation as the main theme of the Civil War.

Biographies:

³⁵ Richard G. Mannion, "The Life of A Reputation: The Public Memory of Ulysses S. Grant," Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2012, https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/history_diss/32, pp. 457.

³⁶ "Get 19,876 For Grant Monument." *New York Times* (New York, NY). March 3rd, 1929. <https://www.nytimes.com/1929/03/03/archives/get-19876-for-grant-monument.html?searchResultPosition=23->

³⁷ NY Times, Jul. 24, 1935

³⁸ More discussion about the reconciliationist school is found in this book chapter: Caroline E. Janney "A NEW GENERATION,: 1913–1939," In *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, 266-305. University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Accessed October 16, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469607078_janney.13.

Most biographies of Grant were initially written in the 1860s and 1880s before tapering off. Biographies of Grant begin to make something of a comeback in the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the most negative biographies written about Grant in the 1930s were written by Northerners, not by Southerners. There could be several reasons for this. One is the Northern apathy highlighted above, which meant that Northern historians were taking research and facts about Grant from Southerners who had axes to grind. Another is the erosion of Grant's political career, spurred on by comparison to the scandals of Warren G. Harding in the 1920s.³⁹ John Simon proposes that Great Depression authors in particular did not look at the Gilded era of Grants presidency kindly because of its decadence.⁴⁰

Two of the most prominent examples of negative biographies on Grant were William B. Hesseltine's *Ulysses S. Grant Politician*, published in 1935, and Allan Nevins's *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration*, published in 1936. These were some of the first biographies to tackle Grant's political career instead of simply focusing on his military one. Much of their characterizations of Grant seemed to take a lot from Dunning and his contemporaries.

Even in a book focused on Grant's role as a politician, much like Dunning and Bowers, Grant fades into the background of a confused partisan war, corrupt associates, and an extremely over-the-top age of wealth. He's a simple man, not particularly well-suited to either politics or political leadership. Hesseltine wrote that Grant was "particularly ignorant of the Constitution and inept at handling men."⁴¹ Thought this might seem like something of a concession towards

³⁹ Richard G. Mannion, "The Life of A Reputation: The Public Memory of Ulysses S. Grant," Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2012, https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/history_diss/32, pp. 430.

⁴⁰ John Y. Simon, "The Paradox of Ulysses S. Grant," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 81, no. 4 (1983): 366-82, Accessed October 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23381163>, pp. 370.

⁴¹ William B. Hesseltine, *Ulysses S. Grant, Politician*, Dodd Mead. 1935, pp. 100.

the political difficulties Grant was forced to deal with at the time, Hesseltine went on to claim that Grant's "mental endowment was not great."⁴²

Hesseltine takes much of his criticism of Grant's handling of Reconstruction from the Dunning School, criticizing him for being too harsh and not conciliatory enough to the Southern states. Dunning is included in the bibliography and Hesseltine's footnotes. Interestingly, in a review, the author takes Hesseltine to task for this, believing that in fact Grant did not do enough to help the freedmen and subdue the Southern states.⁴³ Since this review was written in the same time-frame as Hesseltine was writing, this shows a curious glimpse into aberrations of thought about Reconstruction (though still interestingly enough, the review was still negative about Grant's presidency. It took Grant to task for lack of action during his presidency rather than being too harsh to the South.)

In addition to criticizing Grant's political career, Hesseltine also shows disdain for his military one, something of a break from earlier Grant biographies that painted him as the triumphant victor. Hesseltine claims that it was Grant's "hammering techniques" and dogged determination that brought him [success], not particular facility with tactics or strategy."⁴⁴

Grant's ignorance and slow mental facilities were not only the hallmarks of both his military and political career but the main point that readers took from the book itself. This is the trait that reviews of the book harped on, praising Hesseltine for fair-mindedness and disinclination toward romanticization. One reviewer claimed that Hesseltine's biography was a

⁴² Hesseltine, *Grant: Politician*, 101.

⁴³ Elbert J. Benton, *The American Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (1936): 553-54. Accessed October 18, 2020. doi:10.2307/1839890.

⁴⁴ Hesseltine, *Grant: Politician*, 5.

good look at a “blundering” character, while another praised the biography for shedding light on the harm “good men” do.⁴⁵

Grant is not a malicious figure. This is carried on from his memoirs, which sought to frame his simple-mindedness as a good thing, to the Dunningites and Reconstruction revisionists, now on to his own biographers. He’s a honest person and a patriotic one. Hesseltine, among others, believed Grant just had no business being in politics.

Keeping with the theme of Grant fading into the background of his own administration, the next prominent Grant political biographer, Nevins was an admirer of Hamilton Fish, seeking to cast him as the true genius of the Grant administration, hampered by Grant’s inability as a statesman. Dunning had also cast Fish as the secret genius of the Grant administration.

The foreword to the Nevins book wastes no time in diminishing any sort of political achievements Grant himself may have made, by claiming that “this volume constitutes the first real effort to treat the achievements of one of our ablest Secretaries of State, of by far the strongest member of the Grant Administration-- the leader who, as these pages show, saved that Administration from total disgrace.”⁴⁶

Nevins shows this perception that Grant was just intrinsically not born to be a politician. “Here is the story of the way in which Grant, with all his mingled strengths and weaknesses, his gifts and his inadequacies, failed the country which had looked to him for courage, vision, and pr

⁴⁵ Horace Green, "General Grant in the Role of Politician and Statesman: Mr. Hesseltine's Account of His Public Career Gives the Facts about a Period Wrapped in Controversy ULYSSES S. GRANT: POLITICIAN. by William B. Hesseltine. Illustrated. 452 Pp. American Political Leaders Series. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. \$4." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Sep 22, 1935. AND Sidney Ratner, *Political Science Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1937): 307-09. Accessed October 18, 2020. doi:10.2307/2144090.

⁴⁶ Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration*, Dodd Mead, 1936, pp. 10

inciple.”⁴⁷ Whatever his strengths were, there was no way they could be molded into something resembling a statesman. In some ways, it seems like a way of reconciling Grant’s victory as a general with his failure as a president, without necessarily completely diminishing Grant’s skills whatsoever like other writers.

Negative biographies of Grant were not the only biographies of Grant published in the late 1920s and 1930s. JFC Fuller, a military historian, was able to write several popular works on Grant’s military career, including *The Generalship of US Grant*, which was published in 1929. Fuller ignored Grant’s political career, instead opting for a step by step look at his military tactics. Fuller conceded that Grant was not necessarily someone who seemed born for greatness: he had a “simple and loveable character.”⁴⁸ Yet, Fuller claims that Grant taught himself a “grand strategy” for how to win the Civil War as he learned on the job.⁴⁹ Part of Fuller’s more positive spin could have been because he was an Englishman. His focus is on the peace that Grant, and by extension the Union, brought to the country, without coming from the perspective of regional bitterness or racism. The biography was marketed in the United States but read more largely in Europe.

Lesser biographies during the 20s and 30s that mainly focused on Grant’s military career were also published. The NY Times ran a review of a biography by Robert R. McCormick, in which the reviewer claimed that it was a convincing estimate of Grant’s military greatness. Still, even in the positivity, strains of negativity remain. The book is adept at showing how Grant’s “strength in one area was a weakness in another,” alluding to Grant’s political career.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Nevins, *Hamilton Fish*, 11.

⁴⁸ JFC Fuller, *The Generalship of US Grant*. Da Capo Press. 1929, pp.200

⁴⁹ Fuller, *The Generalship of US Grant*, 190.

⁵⁰ Horace Green, “A Convincing Estimate of Grant’s Military Greatness,” *New York Times*, NY, 1934.

Positive biographies of Grant could be met with scathing reviews from Northern magazines as well. One review of a positive biography, published in 1929, disagreed with the book's overall assessment and claimed that Grant's virtues, such as they were, "were indistinguishable from those of a police sergeant." The review goes on to say that "he was a ham as a tactician, and habitually wasted his men." It does not leave his political career unscathed either, claiming that before Grant "became President he went over to the Radical Republicans and was largely to blame for the worst horrors of Reconstruction."⁵¹

W.E.B. Du Bois and Black Reconstruction

After the Dunning school was popularized in the early 1900s, it was certainly not met with universal acclaim. Black writers in particular pushed back against what they conceptualized as an extremely racist interpretation of Reconstruction. One of the most famous examples was W.E.B Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935, which reframed the "failure" of Reconstruction as the psychological warfare of whiteness and contended that African Americans had done a lot of work on the ground, in contrast to the general characterization of Reconstruction as a complete failure. This was not the first time Du Bois had written about Reconstruction. He had published essays ranging all the way back to the first decade of the twentieth century. This publication was, however, the most widely read, influential, and notable.

Though Du Bois was not sympathetic to Dunning's characterization of Reconstruction, neither was he looking to redeem the federal government of their failings. If one was looking to find praise for Grant and his administration, they are few and far between. Du Bois did praise

⁵¹ *Meet General Grant* by W. E. Woodward (Horace Liverwright, publishers); *The American Mercury*, 1928 <https://theamericanmercury.org/2010/04/meet-general-grant/>

some of the Radicals' programs as successes adopted by Southern Democrats but like Dunning, Du Bois is focused on actors on the ground, in this case the freedmen fighting for their rights.

Grant himself is mentioned briefly. He is criticized for the way his army treated contraband or slaves who ran to freedom through the Union Army. Grant put these people to work in "appalling conditions," using them as a free source of labor. His army was rampantly racist and abusive towards the freed slaves.

This publication is particularly important because it presents an alternate interpretation of not only Reconstruction but also the Civil War itself. Unlike the Reconciliationist school or the Lost Cause School, Du Bois and other writers put enslaved people first and foremost in the narrative. This is the Civil War narrative that would begin to catch on with both scholars and the public, even more after the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. This narrative would provide Grant with an even more complicated legacy, stressing both his failures as a liberator of the Southern freedmen like Du Bois did in his writing but also positing that Grant's administration may not have been the failure it could have been, as scholarship in the 1990s would begin to focus more on his attempts to protect black citizens in the South.

Historiographical Argument and Conclusion:

When writing a paper about popular history and the Civil War, one must be careful not to tread in areas much trodden before. Most of the publications I am using for this paper are famous, oft-studied ones that molded considerable minds and influenced considerable scholarship as well as public attention. Much research has been poured into the historiography of the American Civil War and how it has changed over time. This paper has covered some of the main schools briefly: the Lost Cause, the Dunning School, reconciliationist and emancipationist narratives. Where it

makes a compelling historiographical argument is, I believe, where it focuses on Grant's place in these various schools of thought, instead of pretending like Grant's memory laid dormant in between his death and the resurgence of interest in him that began in the 1980s.

Studying Grant's place in particular in the realm of popular Civil War history is important because it helps us to understand both the historiography and the popular memory of the Civil War at large, both in the scholarship and in the public. Grant works as a helpful focal point because of his unique position as the victorious general of the Union Army and as the president in charge during Reconstruction. This period of time (1900-1940) in academic scholarship marks the merging of the Civil War and Reconstruction in the popular consciousness, making Grant a really useful figure in examining changing perceptions. It is not practical to study every part of the Civil War and its memory, so it is helpful to use a singular person as an entrance point into many complex schools of thought. Grant is also a good focal point because of his changing reputation in popular memory in addition to academic memory, as someone famous both to scholars and to the laypeople. Through tracing interest in him in popular history, we can also trace interest in the Civil War itself.

Looking at popular history publications and their treatment of Grant helps us to examine an understudied aspect of Civil War historiography as well. Popular publications merge the gap between public audience and historians. While the definition may continue to be nebulous, it helps us understand ways in which history reached the public, whether it be through novels, scholarly tomes, or biographies.

The Civil War and our memory of it still has large impacts on today. We are still battling about Confederate statues and the way textbooks teach the Civil War in school. Recently, a statue of Grant himself was toppled by protesters, prompting mass debates about his legacy and

whether or not he deserved to be memorialized. His policies, as a general and as a president, still loom large in our public consciousness, as do both Grant's flaws and virtues. It is important and necessary that we examine all the ways in which revisionism, distortion, hero-worship, and vilification have molded a very national reputation.

Grant's reputation in the period from his death to the late 1930s is crucial towards our larger understanding of the Civil War. Intertwining with various different schools of thought, Grant's core essential traits become clear. They're just used by different authors for different ends. Grant's image has not stopped as a piece of symbolism or as a representation of something far more than one man. We continue to stand in his shadow. Hopefully, through tracing all aspects of his memory, we can find some of the light.

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Wealth and David: Jewish Quotas at Elite Universities

By Shea Simmons

Introduction:

The historical question I wish to explore in this paper is how Jewish quotas at elite universities affected Jewish students and Jewish wealth. Though the general existence of these quotas is well known, the question I wish to explore is how it impacted the students denied access, the general university atmosphere and the Jewish conceptualization of wealth and class at the time. The quotas that I will be looking at were in place primarily from the 1920s to the 1950s, before being dismantled in the 1960s. Why did they come about? What purpose did they serve? How did they hamper Jewish students and their climb to wealth? How were perceptions of Jewish wealth and inequality affecting these quotas? How did these universities serve as a pipeline and conduit to wealth? In general, I would like to look at both the actual effect of these quotas and the perceived effect: how they were viewed, why they were thought necessary, and how they made an impact both on Jewish students and non-Jewish students alike. What do these quotas say about Jewish people in American society from 1920 to the 1950s?

Universities developed Jewish quotas because of a perceived anger at Jewish people “unfairly” hoarding wealth from people who deserved it. There was a widespread belief that Jewish people should not be able to obtain the same status as the traditional American elite. This attitude was rooted in deep anti-Semitism and early stereotypes about Jewish people. Though these prejudices were never articulated, in so many words, quotas were a form of gate-keeping not only for academic classes but also to the upper economic classes. These quotas influenced Jewish people’s own perceptions of their economic status: in some cases it made

Jewish people and academics work harder to prove themselves and band together, paradoxically increasing their economic status but also the resentment they faced. It discouraged others, who criticized the Jewish community's emphasis on wealth and on assimilation. Whether quotas actively stopped certain Jewish people from attaining wealth or encouraged them to accumulate more is hard to quantify numerically and varies from person to person but it's clear that these quotas did have a wide-ranging effect on Jewish lives. Ultimately, Jewish quotas affirmed a type of university life that separated Jewish students from non-Jewish students who were presumed to belong at these elite universities.

Scholarly Contribution/Historiography

Much literature has been written on this subject and, as such, finding ways to slot my own research into a "gap" is a little tricky. I tend to find that most of the secondary literature tends to me more descriptive than analytical. They tend to describe the ways that the quotas were enacted and detail the policies of the university. They also tend to focus on just one university at a time instead of looking at general trends. When they do address general trends, it also tends to be more limited in scope.

Where my research fits in is analyzing Jewish quotas not just as they were but also as they were perceived and justified. I am going to use this to illuminate a broader point about the way Jewish people and their economic status were seen at this point in American society. My research focuses the why and the effect of these quotas rather than just the "how." Through writing this paper, I am not treating this as a singular, university by university event but rather as a serious policy that had serious, wide-ranging consequences.

So how will I answer this question? I will be looking at court cases, newspapers, and memoirs to gather anecdotal evidence and personal views on these quotas. I will be using this to see the effect that these quotas had on Jewish people at the time and how they felt about these quotas. These sources are also good for illuminating the sentiments and justification of those who enacted these quotas. What did they have to say about them? How did they effect the student body?

I also want to use student papers and even fictionalized portrayals (such as Fitzgerald's novel) to illustrate the general atmosphere of these elite universities. These primary sources are illuminating not only in how Jewish students and Jewish quotas were perceived but also in the ways that these universities intersected with wealth. They illustrate a culture of wealthy students using the universities as leverage for a wealthy career. They help connect these places to perceived wealth and class. They help show us the ways in which shutting people out and letting people in would have been important.

I will also be using some primary sources that detail Jewish daily life, in addition to using primary sources that detail daily life at elite universities. All of these primary sources will be analyzed under the lens of wealth and perceived wealth, Jewish class and how they felt about their class status in American society.

Background:

Jewish quotas largely began in elite American universities around the 1920s, due to both rising anti-Semitism and also a new wave of Jewish immigrants. They reached their peak during the 1930s and 40s, before largely abating during the 1950s and 1960s. According to one study,

Jewish student representation at Harvard increased to about 25 percent, at Yale to about 30 percent, and at Princeton to about 20 percent [during the 1950s and the 1960s].”⁵² This coincided with more diverse college policies in general, as affirmative action began in its infancy. In the 1960s, the recruitment of black Americans increased significantly. “By the 1970s, they [colleges] supported some use of "benign quotas" or admissions" goals" to help blacks and other racial minorities.”⁵³ However, by that time Jewish students were not considered minorities and the earlier Jewish quotas put in place were largely forgotten or covered up by the universities.

The move toward greater access to a college education coincided with a general rise of Jewish wealth in the post-war society of America. “For American Jews life after 1945 was distinguished by new affluence, the building of community institutions, relocation to the suburbs, and the ability of Judaism to take its place as one of the "three religions of democracy. At the same time American antisemitism between 1945 and 1947 was still a significant force.”⁵⁴ That is not to say that Jewish people did not achieve wealth in earlier decades or that Jewish people did not struggle in the post-war boom. Indeed, stereotyping of Jewish people during the 1920s and 1930s was often that of unfair economic prosperity, greedy misers or hoarders. However, many Jewish people were immigrants during that time and did not have access to the same climbing levels of wealth that white Americans would have. That would change in the 1940s and 1950s, paralleling the rise of Jewish students attending elite universities.

⁵² Marcia G. Synnott, "The Half-Opened Door: Researching Admissions Discrimination at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton," *The American Archivist* 45, no. 2 (1982): 180. Accessed March 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40292482>.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 180.

⁵⁴ Jason Kalman, "Dark Places Around the University: The Johns Hopkins University Admissions Quota and the Jewish Community, 1945-1951," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 81 (2010), pp 240.. Accessed March 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23509958>

So, why were Jewish quotas created during the 1920s and why did they hold strong until the 1950s? Anti-Semitism played a part, as it grew considerably as the number of Jewish immigrants grew. The Ku Klux Klan rose again to prominence during this time, targeting Jewish people and immigrants in addition to other minorities. Quotas were also a general form of gatekeeping for elite universities, which had a certain image to portray and a student body they wanted to attract. America learned from Europe as well. Germany was especially known for its quota system. The elite schools in America would adopt and learn from the elite universities in Germany, which began their quota system in the late 1800s. To further explore the reasons for quotas at elite universities, this paper will focus specifically on Harvard, Yale and Princeton, detailing the reasons given by each college.

Harvard's anti-Jewish sentiment can be linked back to its president at the time, A. Lawrence Lowell, who initially tried to set quotas in the 1920s, explaining himself in letters and in public speeches to both the student body and the schools internal staff. The president believed that in order to protect its reputation, Harvard needed to limit the amount of Jewish students they accepted. Otherwise, they would not be able to attract the kind of people that they wanted to attend. "The anti-Semitic feeling among students is increasing, and it grows in proportion to the increase in the number of Jews," Lowell wrote in a 1922 letter to the Class of 1900's Alfred A. Benesch. "If [the] number [of Jews] should become 40 percent of the student body, the race feeling would become intense. If every college in the country would take a limited proportion of Jews, I suspect we should go a long way toward eliminating race feeling among students."⁵⁵

The accounts of Princeton echo similar sentiments to that of Harvard: quotas were established to preserve a certain balance within the student body. The excerpt below is from a

⁵⁵ Charles B. Hyman and Monika K. Piascik. "Retrospection: President Lowell's Quotas," *The Harvard Crimson*, 2015. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/3/26/retrospection-president-lowells-quotas/>

memoir which helps set the stage for the atmosphere and mix of students that existed at Princeton during the 1920s-1930s.

I was talking to one of the partners in my father office, a non-Jew whose grandfather had gone to Princeton. I was telling him about the kosher kitchen, university-owned, there's a Gemara class, there's a regular group of students that have a minyan three times a day, I was telling him all this. And he said God. If my grandfather knew that, he'd be spinning in his grave. Spinning No one can believe that what goes on at Princeton now really goes on here, that's so out of character for Princeton.⁵⁶

Princeton had an image of a WASP bastion, a place for rich and wealthy students to intermingle with their own kind. Keeping a cap on Jewish students helped maintain this image.

“Princeton's image as an upperclass Protestant bastion - "the country club of the Ivy League" or "the most northern of the southern colleges" as it was sometimes known - owed much to its unique non-residential eating clubs (immortalized by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1917) in his autobiographical novel, *This Side of Paradise*) which had begun in the 1800s due to the University's inability or unwillingness to feed the students in a sufficiently luxurious manner.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Marianne Sanua, "Stages in the Development of Jewish Life at Princeton University," *American Jewish History* 76, no. 4 (1987): 400. Accessed May 15, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23883299>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 401.

Those eating clubs will be further described later in the paper but this helps set the scene for the kind of atmosphere that Princeton wanted to create. When quoting a student who had attended Princeton in the 1930s, Sanua inserted this impression of life on campus:

“All of the pressures at this University twenty-five years ago were 'collegial.' They were to create a homogenous environment. They would produce a community in which everybody had a similar value structure, a similar experience, a similar undergraduate time during his four years at Princeton. If one was going to spend four years here, and have an opportunity to participate in a community, there was no option other than to be part of this single, integrated, University life. The heterogeneity which you accept as second nature in your Princeton experience is in many respects foreign to the Princeton that I knew. . . . People who came here sought what they thought the Princeton experience was about... It never crossed their minds that Princeton might be many things, or that the University could be strengthened by the creation or manifestations of diversity.⁵⁸”

Though this exclusivity was a hallmark of Princeton, the college claimed not to use quotas for a long time. In 1948, the director of admissions told the *Daily Princetonian* that the school had never used a quota system, a contrast to Harvard who had been open about their Jewish quotas at the time they were enforced. However, documents such as a letter describing a conversation with the Princeton president in the 1930s indicate otherwise. Specifically, in the

⁵⁸ Ibid, 402.

letter, the president is accused of setting quotas, getting around their official mandate through “character” focus in admissions and other sneaky sets of screening.⁵⁹

Though enrollment would go up after World War II, that was partially because of a change in the college atmosphere to include more diversity such as a Hillel and Jewish student groups. This supports the thesis that the quotas were a form of gatekeeping in order to keep a certain student population that would then have access to the advantages elite colleges had to offer.

Much like Princeton and Harvard, “admission [to Yale] was largely given to preparatory school students from wealthy families. But Jews were rarely among that group.”⁶⁰ Though the surrounding area of Yale was heavily Jewish, the college’s numbers did not reflect this. “Ironically, although Yale administrators sought to protect the student body from Jewish infiltration, the city of New Haven had a strong working-class Jewish community had that settled in the city in the 19th century.”⁶¹ The Yale administrators were generally open about this in the late 1800s, claiming that they wanted to keep a certain student body, much like Princeton and Harvard.⁶² The campus also experienced anti-Semitic incidences. In a book, *Joining the Club — A History of Jews and Yale*, Dan A. Oren writes that the members of a fraternity put on an anti-Semitic play as part a hazing process for the pledges. Further anti-Semitic incidents and attitudes will be covered later in the paper.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid, 406.

⁶⁰ DAN A. OREN, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale*. (The Yale Scene; University Series, number 4.) New Haven: Yale University Press, in cooperation with the American Jewish Archives, 1985.

⁶¹ Ibid, 20.

⁶² Ibid, 42.

⁶³ Ibid, 123.

What is interesting, however, was that Jewish people were able to strike back at this unfair system, complaining to the extent that “school parents resulted in fairer admissions to the University during the early 1920s, and Jews seized upon this openness to attend Yale, applying in droves.”⁶⁴ This provides some nuance to the belief that the whole history of elite schools during the 1920s was that of discrimination and oppression. Jewish people did have a voice and were able to use it: it’s important to not lose sight of this even as we chronicle the quota system used against them.

The Jewish students were able to do very well at Yale, partially because they knew they had to work harder for it. In the 1920s their grades better on average than other students, and they received more more awards in the academic field. The Yale administrators were not pleased by this.

By 1923, Jewish quotas were enforced again but this time, much like Princeton, it would be a sneaky form. The administrators declared a housing shortage in order to further police who they were letting in and quietly shut Jewish people out. This quota system would continue, until it was lifted in the late 1940s and the amount of Jewish students attending began to rise again.

Jewish Discrimination and Economic Anxiety

Much anti-Semitism was because of the fear about Jewish people and their wealth, relying on stereotypes of Jewish people as controllers of capital and unfair hoarders. To be clear, this did not accurately reflect the Jewish experience either in Europe or America at any point in time: Jewish people in America in the 1800s and early 1900s were frequently immigrants who had to work very hard to eke out any form of wealth for themselves. However, Jewish success

⁶⁴ Ibid, 123.

stories were also frequent partially due to a culture that valued education and success. This led to an uneasy characterization, simultaneously of people who did not belong to the upper classes and yet were unfairly barging their way into wealth.

One example of popular anti-Semitism in the 1920s and 1930s was Father Coughlin, who believed that Jews and Communists were in league with powerful, wealthy men like bankers in order to destroy the average American worker. They controlled wealth unfairly and kept it from WASP/average American families. Coughlin was a well-known speaker who travelled across America, often receiving vast audiences. He's representative of a wider outlook on Jewish people.⁶⁵

This kind of anti-Semitic rhetoric, linking Jewish people to unfair wealth, could be traced all the way back to the medieval ages but it was in the 1800s that it really found its root. "The nineteenth century was chiefly one of individual enterprise and competition. The Jews excelled in both these aspects through centuries of persecution and consequent need of adjustment to adverse circumstances. The economic life of the age was in the direction which favored the Jews."⁶⁶ This is one explanation given, though the characterization seems a bit simplistic. Obviously, Jewish people frequently suffered and cannot be characterized as a monolith. Nevertheless, the idea of a separate Jewish community that had consistently adjusted itself to adverse circumstances, placing a high value on support and education, is one that seems accurate and reflective of Jewish history in Europe.

⁶⁵ Ronald Modras, "Father Coughlin and Anti-Semitism: Fifty Years Later." *Journal of Church and State* 31, no. 2 (1989) pp. 28.

⁶⁶ Kevin MacDonald, "Jewish Involvement in Shaping American Immigration Policy, 1881-1965: A Historical Review," *Population and Environment* 19, no. 4 (1998) pp 300.

The article goes on to say that “no student of the Jewish problem can overlook the marvelous record of Jewish achievement and prosperity during the nineteenth century. Nazism provided the impoverished...classes, the backbone of German cultural and national life, with an outlet for their pent-up feelings [about Jewish wealth].”⁶⁷ This can also be applied to America, particularly in regards to the Great Depression and economic anxiety in the 1920s and 1930s, when these quotas really began to be established.

The article stresses that Jewish people were seen as responsible for the German’s miseries. They were hoarding wealth unfairly from the people who deserved it. This particularly illustrates the gap between the perceived deserving and the non-deserving of wealth. Jewish quota systems were designed to privilege one group of people in their climb to the top and not the other. This, of course, leads to the essential linkage between elite schools and wealth.

How Were Elite Schools Regarded As Essential For Wealth?

Though the link between elite schools and better outcomes is under-studied and hard to gauge (especially in regards to the early decades of the twentieth century), one important aspect to remember is the way that these schools are **perceived** as a gateway to wealth. Typical of this perception is an article in the Yale Law Journal that claims that,” not only do elite students gain more access to elite schools and are favoured, they are then set up to be more advantaged by these schools in later life. The reasoning for this is given as thus,

“What defines elite schools is the fact that they have vastly disproportionate control over or access to resources, where such resources are relevant to the elite. Those

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 301.

resources included academic capital, social ties to elite families and other institutions of power, the capacity to guide and transfer culture, economic capacity, and human resources. Having people who culturally “fit” matters, and one of the best ways to fit in elite environments is to spend time within them (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1977).” Inequality also emerges from the social connections that develop from spending time with other elites (or soon to be elites).”⁶⁸ These social connections are perhaps the most important aspect of linking wealth to an elite university. Through attending, one can network with other like-minded individuals and increase social capital, hopefully resulting in better opportunities for job and wealth accumulation.

Jewish students knew this and in some cases were more likely to see college as a pathway to wealth than Non-Jewish students. This excerpt outlines why:

“The two groups were striking: where Jewish students looked to college as a vehicle of upward mobility, Gentile students viewed college as a means of adding a bit of polish to a status already virtually assured; where Jews took grades very seriously, their Christian counterparts opted for the "gentleman's C"; where Jews concentrated their energy on the faculty and books, their overwhelmingly Protestant classmates gravitated towards sports and social clubs. There were, of course, exceptions to these patterns; some Jews, especially those of upper-class origins, fit fairly easily into the dominant gentlemanly culture, and some Gentiles scorned this culture as snobbish and frivolous. Yet exceptions aside, a

⁶⁸ Grace W. Tsuang. "Assuring Equal Access of Asian Americans to Highly Selective Universities." *The Yale Law Journal* 98, no. 3 (1989), pp. 661.

discomfiting bedrock of reality lay beneath the ethnic stereotypes: Jewish students were, in fact, of more modest backgrounds than their Christian classmates.⁶⁹

General Anti-Semitism In Universities

Many universities did not “understand the dangers posed by Hitler and the Third Reich...senior administrators and faculty, and even some students, played [a role] in creating and then supporting conservative and fascist German and Italian power structures because they appear to reflect their own values and beliefs about power.”⁷⁰ Student newspapers also reflect general anti-Semitism and disinterest in Jewish suffering. In the next section, the newspapers of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton from the late 1920s to the early 1950s will be examined to show the anti-Semitic attitude of the colleges and how attitudes toward Jewish people who were attending can shed light on the quota system and the reasoning behind it.

Harvard Student Newspapers

Looking through the Harvard student newspapers, we can begin to trace a pattern of general sentiment on campus toward Jewish students, which helps to illuminate the Jewish experience of those attending and the general attitude at the time. Though these sources do not strictly tell us about the quotas enforced, they instead point to reasonings and general stereotypes of Jewish students that would have gone on at the time. The extracts below were pulled from the *Harvard Crimson*, a long-running student newspaper that continues to be published to this day. I

⁶⁹ Jerome Kerabel. "Status-Group Struggle, Organizational Interests, and the Limits of Institutional Autonomy: The Transformation of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1918-1940," *Theory and Society* 13, no. 1 (1984), pp. 10.

⁷⁰ Hillary Earl, "Business As Usual: Elite Universities in the 1930s". *Academic Matters: Journal of Higher Education*, (2010).

choose to pull articles from 1925 to the mid- 1930s in order to get a best sense for the time range. Overall, what these articles show is a general divide between Jewish students and other students: a belief that Jewish students did not blend into the culture of the college and were unfairly hoarding wealth. Coupling this with an environment of economic anxiety during the Great Depression and general wealth, it's not hard to read the extracts below as reasonings for the gate-keeping that the quotas provided.

The first article was published in 1925, detailing the speech of a rabbi given during a series of lectures about religion. His appearance on campus shows that Harvard was both keenly aware of the separation between religions but also open-minded enough to acknowledge Jewish people's existence, paralleling the general system of quotas. They could acknowledge Jews a little but not too much.

The article claimed that "the noted Jewish leader pleaded for co-operation and understanding between Jews and Christians for the propagation of the ideals which are common to both," while he "gave the lecture on "Judaism." The article went on to say that the rabbi claimed that "it is a most unfortunate thing that the Jews and Christians have become so separated during the ages and that so great a misunderstanding has grown up between them."⁷¹

The gap between Jewish people and Christian people is firmly established here. It's relevant to note that even a rabbi is characterizing this as a "misunderstanding" rather than a systemic pattern of prejudice against Jewish people by Christians. This talk illuminates how Jewish students at Harvard may have felt a divide enough that Jewish leaders had to plead for unity between Christians and Jews. The quota system was part of one of alienation.

⁷¹ Harvard Crimson, 1925.

The next article published in 1928 was an opinion piece, unlike the strictly objective reporting of the 1925 one. This one helps hammer in the anti-semitic stereotypes that would have been running rampant at Harvard, as well as in places outside Harvard. The author claims that, “individually, by their artistic ability and business acumen the Jews play an important part in American life. But, on the other hand, in their race clannishness, they choose to constitute a distinct body.”⁷²

Again, there is a theme of separation between Jews and Christians, no doubt a symptom of how Jewish students felt while attending Harvard. Key also to note is the stress of business acumen: the stereotype of Jewish people as wealthy but unfairly wealthy is subconsciously littered throughout the article. At the end of the article comes the unity theme again, the stressor once more on the ways that Jews and Christians are divided. The author blames Jewish people for this. “Jews could attain the desired friendly unity with the Gentile much sooner if the chord [of being treated unfairly] were not struck so loudly and often.”⁷³

During the 1930s, articles in the student newspapers began to discuss Hitler, something that no doubt influenced student life on campus and also Jewish quotas. As detailed in the earlier section, American universities took cues from European universities on these sorts of quotas and the 1930s saw this violently upheld. However, the rise of Hitler also brought forth questions about anti-semitism on campus and whether or not the students at Harvard actually believed in it.

During the early 1930s, the *Crimson* generally dismissed Hitler and his ideas as a little ridiculous. This could lead to surprising progressivism, such as an article published in 1931. Here, the author flatly denies any of Hitler’s beliefs. The article flatly states that “the Nazi idea of race purity and of the emergence of a dominant national organism is a fantastic one. It is

⁷² Ibid, 1928.

⁷³ 1928.

ridiculous to suppose that nations, purged of foreign elements or not, are subject to laws or natural evolution and the survival of the fittest.”⁷⁴

However, one moves to 1933 and while Hitler was still dismissed as silly, this author now played into Jewish stereotypes once more. They downplayed Hitler as a threat, claiming that “throughout the last week there has been circulated a persistent and well organized propaganda against Adolph Hitler and his treatment of Jews in Germany.” How has this propaganda been organized? Well, they answer in the next paragraph:

“Even if one excludes the Jewish control of the American press from the question, and accepts uncritically the prevailing reports of the Nazi atrocities, the present state of world political evolution makes any attack on Germany alone the most offensive vauntings of hubris.”⁷⁵ Once again, belief and resentment in Jewish power clouds the article subconsciously. These sorts of stereotypes about Jews controlling newspapers helps illustrate a resentment that must have been harbored against them. Why are they in control? They don’t deserve to be.

Another article published in 1933 again shows us how this stereotype of Jews holding unfair economic power must have been rampant at Harvard. This was a review of a guest speaker. Apparently, “he was quite vehement in expressing the opinion that the mistreatment of the Jews in Germany by the Hitler regime was merely an age-old vent; that it was really a symbol of the economic struggle which was going on in Germany today, as well as in every country in the world. The real problem, it was brought out, was not that the Jews are being oppressed, but that seven million of Germany's unemployed are starving.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Crimson, 1931.

⁷⁵ Crimson, 1931.

⁷⁶ Crimson, 1933.

Here is the separation of Jews from Germany's unemployed: there is no way Jewish people could have been affected by the depression. The link of Jews to economics and economic struggles echoes general American sentiment as well and again illuminates how the quota system was partially a strike-back against popular stereotypes of Jewish people as too powerful and too wealthy, where the natural order of things should have put white, Protestants on top (as would have been most of the Harvard students at the time).

Many articles written throughout the 1930s and 40s also do a good job of showing the ways in which discussions about Hitler must have contributed to general anti-semitism on campus. In one case, during a debate on Hitler's policies, an article reports that any talk of his treatment of Jews was banned.

Other editorials either sound the alarm about Hitler's policies or downplay them. In general, they do paint a robust picture of student life, where nuance must be acknowledged. Though there were certainly stereotypes of Jewish people, few Harvard writers wanted them to undergo genocide. Many were concerned about Hitler's policies, particularly as time went on. In general, Harvard may not have been the most tolerant place but it wasn't one that disallowed discourse about Jewish problems or one that wanted Jewish people dead.

In 1951, right at the cusp of Jewish quotas completely going away, comes an interesting and revealing article. This is about eating clubs, which were accused of not letting Jewish students in. Some people struck back. It's not," one member says, "as if we take all the outstanding people in the College and then prohibit the Jewish men who have done well. Our candidates are usually selected with little regard to their activities here. We chose from a certain type and background and there just aren't very many Jewish students in that group to begin

with."⁷⁷ Here comes the fascinating admission that Jewish people were not considered the right type or background to be admitted to these clubs, places where the elite and wealthy could network. That there are not many Jewish students who fit the criteria or even attend the university is because of Jewish quotas. And Jewish quotas were created because of much the same reasoning as the speaker says, they're not from the right type and background.

In general, many of the stereotypes and discourse surrounding Jewish students on Yale's campus were largely the same as one present at Harvard. Both schools are/were considered of similar elite quality and wanting to attract similar students from the 1920s to the 1940s time period. They're even in similar locales. Nevertheless, diving into some of Yale's student newspapers does reveal some interesting wrinkles about the sentiment regarding Jewish students and Jewish people on campus.

Like Harvard, Yale was not an unopen place for discourse surrounding Jewish people and Jewish problems, suggesting some degree of open-mindedness even as quotas and stereotypes prevailed. One example would be a lecture given in 1929, about whether or not Jewish people would occupy the Holy Land. Much like the lecture at Harvard, this lecture suggests that the college had contact with Jewish leaders and was at least willing to listen to some of them, even as they limited contact with Jews by necessity with the quota system.

Indeed, the university quota system was in fact criticized in the *Yale Daily Newspaper* in an editorial published in 1931, showing that biases against Jewish people were not at all universal. The author claimed that the quota system was because of the threat Jewish people placed to "Nordic society" and their current place in society (not elaborated upon but assumed to be the difference that Christians placed on their standing from Jewish people). The

⁷⁷ *Crimson*, 1951.

author passionately argues that all students should be allowed the same opportunities and chances to attend the university, believing it is a “failure of popular education” that some people have to face discrimination. Clearly, at the time, some people did not agree with quota system and also saw it as a form of gate-keeping, of creating differences where one group should be allowed access and another group shouldn’t. There were also discussions about Christian/Jewish differences on campus. One example is this ad that ran in the early 1930s in the student newspaper:

Jewish-Christian Group Sponsors Two Meetings for Discussion Of Their Different Faiths
LAZARON, McCARTHY, CLINCHY ADDRESS INFORMAL MEETING

Much like Harvard, views on Germany and Hitler varied. In one editorial, the author dismissed concerns about Olympic game policies. They claimed that they “failed to see any reason why the United States Olympic committee should concern itself about the attitude Germany takes toward its Jewish athletes as long as that government guarantees to allow Jews to compete for foreign nations. Germany has done this”⁷⁸

Jewish students were permitted a voice about anti-Semitism. In 1934, an article was published about “A protest against permitting Dr. Sallet to speak yesterday on ‘The New Foundation of the German Commonwealth’” was circulated on the campus by the Yale chapter of the National Student League, which accused the University Germanic Club of having attempted to keep the lecture secret. The secrecy makes us of the League doubly certain that Dr. Sallet comes to Yale with the definite intention of spreading Nazi propaganda, neither to the benefit of the University or the Germanic Club," the protest stated.”⁷⁹ This passage from the article illuminates both the ways in which the university participated in official anti-Semitism but

⁷⁸ The Yale Daily News, 1934.

⁷⁹ The Yale Daily News, 1934.

also the discourse that was happening in universities, particularly as more and more people began to speak up against Hitler in the 1930s after his ideas started looking less and less ridiculous. Ultimately, it is worth noting that the talk was allowed to be given.

Princeton and F. Scott Fitzgerald

Princeton affords an interesting look into the general WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) atmosphere of elite colleges. One can assume that the stereotypes and challenges of being a Jewish student was quite similar to Harvard and Yale. However, Princeton was uniquely gate-keeping and elite: they were famous for their dinner clubs. By looking at these clubs, one can understand the people who attended these colleges and their association with wealth. One good place to look is F. Scott Fitzgerald, who graduated from Princeton and published his first book, detailing experiences there.

One passage in the book really highlights these clubs: “The upper-class clubs, concerning which he had pumped a reluctant graduate during the previous summer, excited his curiosity: Ivy, detached and breathlessly aristocratic; Cottage, an impressive melange of brilliant adventurers and well-dressed philanderers; Tiger Inn, broad-shouldered and athletic, vitalized by an honest elaboration of prep-school standards; Cap and Gown; flamboyant Colonial; Literary Quadrangle, and the dozen others, varying in age and positions.”⁸⁰ These clubs were crucial for networking at Princeton and also had punishing standards: they were upper-class, posh, and in order to make it in, one had to fit the criteria. Fittingly, in writing his novel, Fitzgerald refers to

⁸⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1929, pp. 51

the sole Jewish character as a “Jew” and characterizes them as an outcast, not one who is a part of these dinner clubs or able to sufficiently network.

The general environment of Princeton and the exclusionary nature of these clubs echo the general exclusionary nature of these colleges. One had to fit the standards of upper-class Americana in order to be let in. The atmosphere of these colleges made it clear that elite connections could happen if they allowed it. Jewish students were allowed a voice to an extent but the divide was always there and these recollections/student newspapers speak to a general environment where the divide between the few admitted and the Christian population was always there.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jewish stereotypes fed into Jewish quotas which ultimately fed into a system of discrimination on these elite university campuses. Why this matters is because universities and their benefits are tied into our economic system and our perceived classes. Jewish people were either shut out or only begrudgingly allowed to network, belong at these schools, and try to attain wealth. What these quotas can tell us is how the perception of Jewish wealth influenced the reality of it. They can tell us a lot about anti-Semitism and how people saw Jews. Ultimately, they suggest a reality where some people deserve wealth and some do not. This is something that can be applied to much of our perceptions today in America: it has simply mutated into different forms.

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