

The area around the small village of Nassau in Rensselaer County, New York was once the focal point of Jewish life for hundreds of recently immigrated families from Eastern Europe in the years 1900 - 1940.

Starting at **1 - Nassau Synagogue and Jewish Community Center** (0.0) at 12 Albany Avenue (Route 20) this modest building was the center of education, worship and social life of the community. Established in 1913, the Synagogue is pre-dated by the incorporation of the local Hebrew Farmer's Association in 1908.

Immediately to the left of the building was the right of way of the former Albany Southern Railway. An electric third-rail trolley line, it ran from Albany south to Hudson from 1899 to 1929 providing convenient transportation for both passengers and freight.

Going west on Albany Avenue less than one block, turn left on John Street (Post Office). On the left, the wooden buildings are former freight buildings from the era of the trolley cars. To the right, on the hill is the Donald P. Sutherland Elementary School. Opened in 1939 as a Roosevelt-era public works project, the school is named for a long-time principal and was orchestrated to encourage Nassau to join the newly formed East Greenbush Central School District.

2. Nassau Fair Grounds. (0.2) The area now containing the little league field, Village Commons Park and gazebo, post office and senior apartments was from 1873 until 1943 the site of the Nassau Fair. A major social, sporting and agricultural event for Nassau and surrounding communities, harness racing was a featured attraction. For several years in the 1930's greyhound racing was held in the summer months. Determined to be neither legal or illegal, it was shut down by NYS Police. Many believed racing interests in Saratoga Springs were behind the action.

To the right, the long building now apartments, was once **3. Kosegarten Bros. Piano Action Factory.** Originally located west of Nassau in Schodack, the factory opened in 1905. By 1915 over 30 percent of the working population of Nassau village were employed there and production exceeded 35,000 piano actions (the system of felt hammers that struck the piano strings) annually. With the advent

of gramophones and later radios, the factory was liquidated in 1929. In the following years a number of businesses occupied the space including Stromwasser's Print Shop and the Eisenberg Brothers Builtbest Homes, one of the first manufacturers of pre-built homes in the country. Most of the homes built in Nassau in the late 1940's and early 50's are examples of these modest homes.

Turning left on Fairgrounds Street, turn left on Chatham Street (Rt. 203) towards the village center. Along the way, on the left where the Nassau Hose Company is located, the rear portion of the building was the former Nassau School No. 1, once housing grades 1 - 8 in four classrooms. Students wishing to go on to high school would take the trolley to either Valatie or Rensselaer.

Past the firehouse, just before the brick building (former Masonic Hall) was Brother's Meat Market, kosher butchers, opposite was Bethiel's Jewish bakery. Upstairs in the building at the point - now a pizza shop, was the law office of Ralph Cooper. Working with Nathan Naum, local agent for the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, many of the property transactions for immigrants' farms took place here.

At the intersection of Rt. 20, proceed right up Church Street. As you leave the village the hilly, rock-prone terrain is a reminder of the difficulty facing anyone hoping to farm this area. Turning left at Lyons Lake Road County Route 17 (1.7), many of the older homes were once owned by Jewish families. Young people, once their chores were done, would often walk to the Village for a rare opportunity for entertainment. Some of the families living along and near Lyons Lake Road included Bettman, Brother, Goldman and Roth.

Passing Lyon's Lake, on the left is the former Murry's Boarding House (3.2). While not Jewish, it was one of the last farms-turned-boarding houses that continued accepting guests into the 1970's. Continuing to follow Lyons Lake Road to the left, take the dirt road right up the hill. At the end of this short road, take a right. A short distance is **5. Smith's Farm**, a complex of white buildings and a small lake. Samuel and Nettie Smith were one of several immigrant farmers to convert former farm buildings and later build additional facilities for use by summer tourists. Along Central Nassau Road the Jacobs, Lampert, Pollack, Rosenblum families lived.

Turning around at Smith's to return in the direction you came (left) on Central Nassau Road, Co. Route 16, proceed straight across to Krouner Road. Here is the location of the farm of **6. Samuel Krouner** (5.4) (original farm house on the right). Evolving from a farm to boarding house to summer resort to the present-day summer children's camp, Krouner descendants still own and operate the facility. Returning the way you came back to Co. Rt. 15, turn right. On the left are buildings from the former **7. Schneider's Resort** and later Camp White Oaks. In this area the Grodzansky, Lindenbaum and Lisitz families lived.

Continuing back towards Nassau on County Rt. 15 lies Nassau Lake. Prior to the construction of the trolley line, the area was primarily farmland. It was not until the trolleys that the area was considered a suitable location for summer camps by "city people" from Albany and Troy.

In the early 1920's, as a subscription

promotion for the *Albany Evening News*, property was offered on both side of the lake. Priced at \$10 down and \$2.50 a month, over 1,000 20 x 100 foot lots were offered. The \$67.50 lots also included the optional purchase of a WW1 surplus tent until property owners could build their summer camp. The scheme was called Nassau Lake Park and failed with the Great Depression.

Continuing past Nassau Lake we again enter Nassau Village. In the 1800's many mills operated along this stretch of today's Lake Avenue. In the 1950's and 60's local furriers including Harry Hashkowitz produced a variety of products here.

At the intersection with County Rt. 17, to the right, the faded words "Speedy Sales" are visible on the old mill building. For many years the Feldman family manufactured and assembled custom pens in Nassau. Their last factory was located here, closing in the 1990's. Continuing left on Elm Street and then right at the stop light, the Nassau Synagogue and Jewish Community Center will shortly appear on your right.

How this driving guide works:

All routes start at the Nassau Synagogue, 12 Albany Avenue, Nassau, NY 12123. The guide lists the distance from the synagogue in miles (example 3.2.) The names of specific families who lived along the routes depicted are included to the best of our ability. Please note every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible, but due to many limitations of period records, not every family group is listed.

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A Short Driving Tour In and Around Nassau, New York



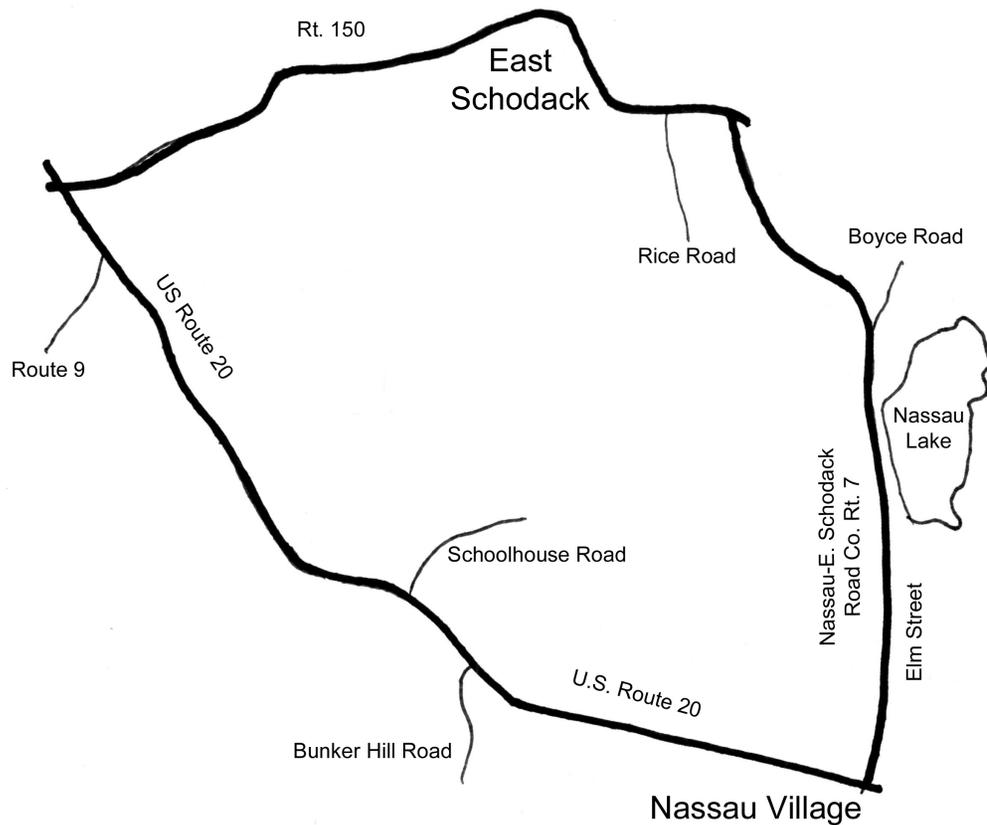
Featuring Local and Jewish Immigrant History

Total Length of Driving Tour: 8.6 miles

Prepared by Kurt Vincent
Nassau Village Historian

in conjunction with a study
"Jewish Immigrant Farmers in the towns of
Schodack & Nassau 1900-1940"
December 2015

and October 2016
Reunion of Immigrant
Jewish Farmers of Rensselaer County



Starting at the Nassau Synagogue (0.0), drive east (or to the right as you face the building) on U.S. Route 20/Albany Avenue a short distance to Nassau's one stop light. In the early 1900's the center of the village was a busy place. On the left, the Nassau House Hotel was located, opposite on the right side (where Cumberland Farms now stands) a block of commercial buildings ran from the corner down Chatham Street. The soda fountain at the Nassau Pharmacy, once located on the corner, was a popular place for young people. At the actual Village Square, where the tall pine tree is, there once was an ornate Victorian bandstand. Concerts were held on summer Saturday nights and considered to be the high point of the week for many. To take advantage of the influx of people, the Nassau Free Library, located further up Church Street remained open Saturday nights.

At the stop light, turn left on Elm Street. Over the years this street has had several names, first Wall Street, then Mill Street and finally Elm Street. Continue straight to the split and bear left. Here starts County Route 7 (0.3). The small stream marks the boundary between the village

and town of Nassau and the town of Schodack. Continuing on Co. Rt. 7 which is also known as the Nassau-East Schodack Road, many remnants of the former Albany Southern Railway line remain. The former rail bed can be traced by the location of powerlines which now utilize the former right-of-way. Between Nassau Village and East Schodack there were 9 marked stops over the slightly more than four mile distance.

Just before Nassau Lake (1.3) a large milk processing plant was once located. Many Jewish farm families had several dairy cows and often milk would be sold as a way to supplement the family income. Milk was cooled at the plant and loaded onto freight cars for further processing and sale.

Farther along the west side of the lake near Best Road was the location of Zarch's Nassau Lake House (1.7). Max Zarch was an immigrant who originally tried his hand at farming and later with wife Lena operated a 32 room hotel. Continuing along Co. Rt. 7 as the road rises we reach the highest point along the former trolley line – Harris Hill. Another boarding house was located here, the Harris Inn. Along this portion of the road the Berger, Gorzynski and Levine families lived.

Before entering East Schodack we pass the location of the former Hoffman Hotel (3.2), another popular Jewish boarding house in the 1920's and 30's. As time went on and officials of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society realized many families were struggling, those with larger farmhouses were encouraged to take in summer boarders. While the Nassau area never reached the so-called Borscht-belt popularity of the Catskills, the initial evolution was exactly the same.

To the left is Rice Road, location of the Rheingold Farm. Like many families the Rheingold's experienced the difficulty of farming on unproductive soil. Their first farm purchased in 1905 was located elsewhere, but later moved in 1917 to the present location. Father Isaac remained a tailor, but his sons became farmers. In 1925 records show mother Fannie Rheingold as head of household with six sons and one daughter. Descendants of the original family still reside here and continue the farming tradition.

Continuing to the hamlet center (4.0), the former school is located next to the church. East Schodack was home to the Braunstein, Finckle, Kagel, Melnoski, Rosenblum, Rudnick, Sanowitz, Silverstein, Steinberg and Wernick families. At the square, turn left on Route 150. Located on the left is the former East Schodack synagogue building (4.1). Congregation Agudas Achim was founded in the 1920's and in the 50's had approximately 60 members. Numerous attempts over the years for the Nassau Synagogue to purchase the decorative Star of David stained glass orna-

ment have been rejected by the current owner of the building.

In 1935 at the hamlet's annual observance of Memorial Day, Dr. Meyer Rheingold was Grand Marshall, Rabbi Morris Rosenblum read the Scriptures and Jacob Krouner recited "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address."

Continuing on Rt. 150, past Payne Road, two local legends from this area persist: First, on the right was the former Payne Farm. During the late 1930's and 40's Borden Dairy Company created an advertising campaign featuring "Elsie the Cow." Local lore has it one of Elsie's stand-in doubles was part of the Payne herd of Jersey heifers.

A little more colorful story is during Prohibition a farmer decided that perhaps running a still might be an opportunity for making a little money on the side and proceeded to conduct business. While this illegal activity could have attracted the attention of local authorities, it was competing moon-shiners who broke up the still. Allegedly they came from Troy, which explains a great deal.

Along Route 150 here and towards West Sand Lake the Adler, Notkin, Ovsanikow and Zinsher families lived. On Palmer Road to the north, the Dreisenstock, Lowish and Steinberg families lived.

At the intersection of Rt. 150 and Routes 9/20 (6.2) turn left. This area is known as Schodack Center. A short distance farther, bear left at the split of Routes 9 and 20, taking Rt. 20 towards Nassau. Along this stretch of Rt. 20 Jewish farm families living here including the Epstein and Gross families. Many of the side roads also had a considerable number of small Jewish farms. On Schoolhouse Road (8.5) the Bach, Bendersky, Chavin, Cohen, Gootkin families lived. Farther east on Bunker Hill Road (10.2) the Baum, Dendroch, Goodman,

Guller, Hines, Loback, Loskovitz, Morgin, Rafolwitz, Tendroch and Zlochower families lived.

Midway down Rt. 20 on Bunker Hill, in the two-story white house on the left (9.4), after first living elsewhere in Schodack, William Pantich settled in 1918. His son, Max, was a much loved and respected family doctor in the area and maintained his practice from this house for 67 years.

Continuing east on Rt. 20 just before entering Nassau is McCellan Road (10.2), named for an early doctor and a very old route, both the Brownstein and Zweig families lived in this vicinity. Many will remember the Zweig's as a prominent family, and Dr. Harry Zweig who established the Nassau Veterinary Clinic in the 1930's.

Continuing straight on Rt. 20 you soon return to Nassau. Just before the Nassau Synagogue, on the left was Nassau's "Economy Store." (10.5) Founded by Louis Swadelson in 1910, the name was later shortened to Delson. With the slogan "if we don't have it, you don't need it," the store was victim to a youthful arsonist in 1982 and still greatly missed by the entire community.

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A Short Driving Tour In and Around East Schodack, New York



Featuring Local and Jewish Immigrant History

Total Length of Driving Tour: 10.5 miles

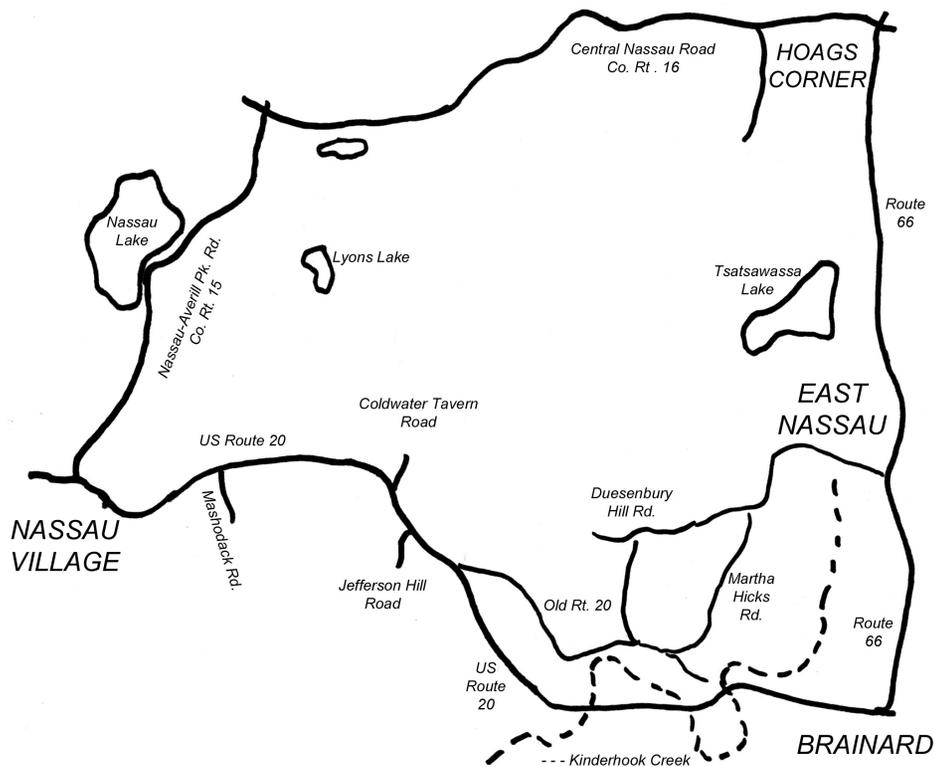
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Starting at the Nassau Synagogue (0.0), drive east (right if facing the building) through Nassau Village on U.S. Route 20. One of the first major highways in the region, this section of the Boston to Buffalo road was first paved just before World War One. Over the years it has had many names including the Boston Post Road and more commonly known locally as the Pittsfield Road. As we continue to head east, the elevation rises and along this stretch of the road Jewish families took advantage of the flow of traffic and opened their houses to boarders and later ran gas stations, taverns and snack bars.

Along Route 20 east of Nassau Village, some of the families who lived here included: Samuel Bass, Sochor Chaikin, Hyman Garbarsky, Marcus Goodman, Meyer Jacobson, Joseph Lederman, Louis Kranse, Isaac Rappaport, Morris Samuels, Myer Sovitsky, David Wasserman and Elias Weinberg.

Along the less travelled side roads, small farms dotted the landscape. Continuing east on Route 20 we pass on the right Mashodack Road (1.1). Samuel Eisenman lived here. To the left is Lyons Lake

Road, County Route 17 (1.3) which is discussed fully in the Nassau Driving Guide.

Continuing straight on Route 20, the high point of the highway is reached (1.9). In the rearview mirror a wonderful view of the Catskills to the west can be seen. Following along, Lords Hill Road (2.2) is on the left. Named after early settlers the Lord Family, one of Nassau's many one-room school houses was located here. In the 1920's the local newspaper reported the Goldman, Buchman, Zarsch, Placksin, Roth, Rubenstein and Eisenman children attended this school with many receiving top grades in their class.

To the left Coldwater Tavern Road (2.9) is a very early road that is named after a tavern that was once located here. As they did not serve alcohol, it was known as only having "cold water." In this area, Henry Honig, Benjamin Lipkowitz, Hyman Wochansky and Walter Welka lived. In the 1950's and 60's a popular bar called "Jack's Place," run by Jacob Honig was located at this intersection. Continuing east on the right is Jefferson Hill Road (3.5). Here Morris Fisgaer, Morris Hochman, Jacob Rayefsky and Samuel Sperling had farms.

As we continue east on Route 20 we cross three bridges built over the Kinderhook Creek (4.3, 4.9 & 5.2). For generations this twisty, steep-sided flow of water presented a challenge to east-west travel. Well into the 1940's bridges washed out from heavy snow melt in the Spring and Fall hurricanes. A network of back roads to the north presented safer options for travel. Along these back roads many small farms were built, sold and abandoned over the years.

After the third bridge, we enter the settlement of Brainard. To the right of Route 20 (5.3) a once extensive mill complex existed. The remaining brick buildings are all that remains today. The mill provided employment for many surrounding farm families, including piece-work available to women and older girls at home. Continuing east on Route 20, we turn right on Brainard Station Road, County Route 19, where the commercial district of Brainard once existed. The former Rutland Railroad station (6.4) is now a private residence and home of Stock Piano Repair. A spur of the railroad ran south from Bennington, Vermont through the Lebanon Valley, through Brainard and then onto the New York Central Railroad connection in Chatham, NY. Here Harry Berkowitz, Max Brager, Clara Heft, Louis Mayeroff and Harry Wexler lived.

Returning briefly to Route 20, after a short right, proceed north on Route 66 (6.5). The hamlet of East Nassau (7.5) was the home of a

synagogue located at 36 Tayer Road, the first right at the square, and is now a private residence. Just beyond the former synagogue a small parking lot provides public access for fisherman on this very scenic stretch of the Kinderhook Creek.

Roughly opposite the Synagogue was the Odd Fellows Hall. In the 1920's the Ku Kluk Klan held meetings here. There is one report of a cross burning in front of a Jewish boarding house at the time.

Returning back to the small town square, to the right Garfield Road, County Rt. 26 leads to the former East Nassau School (8.0) on the left, now a private residence. During the 1940's the Rosen, Schulman, Fader, Stroger, Lukovitz, Mausalf, Rubman and Yosha children attended this school.

East Nassau's Jewish community included Joseph and Walter Dornblum, Abraham Goldenberg, Alexander Hattar, Solomon Kaplan, William Lakritz, Jack Malafsky, Charles Rubman, and David Yosha.

Returning back to the square, continue north on Route 20. Just past the new East Nassau Post Office (8.5) is Tsatsawassa Lake Road (8.7). Originally the native American name of this area, a number of roads where many Jewish farms were located starts here. Duesenbury Road, Martha Hicks Road and Tsatsawassa Lake Road were home to the Sam Berman, Meyer Cohen, Harry Feder, Morris Friedman, Steve Getsky, Jacob Hodos, Hyman Kahn, Trac Kaufman, Joseph Schwartz, Louis Spector, Samuel Stroger, Isadore Tolokonsky Albert Zererner and Max Zuckerman families.

Continuing north on Route 66 we pass some of the few farm locations with reasonably good land. The hamlet of Hoags Corner (11.8) is named after one of the earliest local settlers and land speculators. Once home to many water-driven mills along the Tsatsawassa Creek (Dunham Hollow Road, County Rt. 21) by the early 20th Century much of the prosperity had left the area. Among the Jewish families in this area were: Solomon Kaufman, Joseph Mermelstein, Frank Pilatsky and Isaac Schickler.

This ends the driving guide commentary. To return to Nassau village, there are two options – returning the way we came via Routes 66 and 20 back to Nassau, or from Hoags Corner, proceed west on Central Nassau Road, County Route 16. Passing the former Smith's Farm (15.6) summer resort, at the intersection of Nassau-Averill Park Road, County Route 15, turn left, proceed south passing Nassau Lake, entering Nassau Village on Lake Avenue, merge onto Elm Street and you will soon reach Nassau's only traffic light at the intersection of Route 20. Turn right on Route 20 to reach the Nassau Synagogue (19.0).

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A Short Driving Tour In and Around East Nassau, New York



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