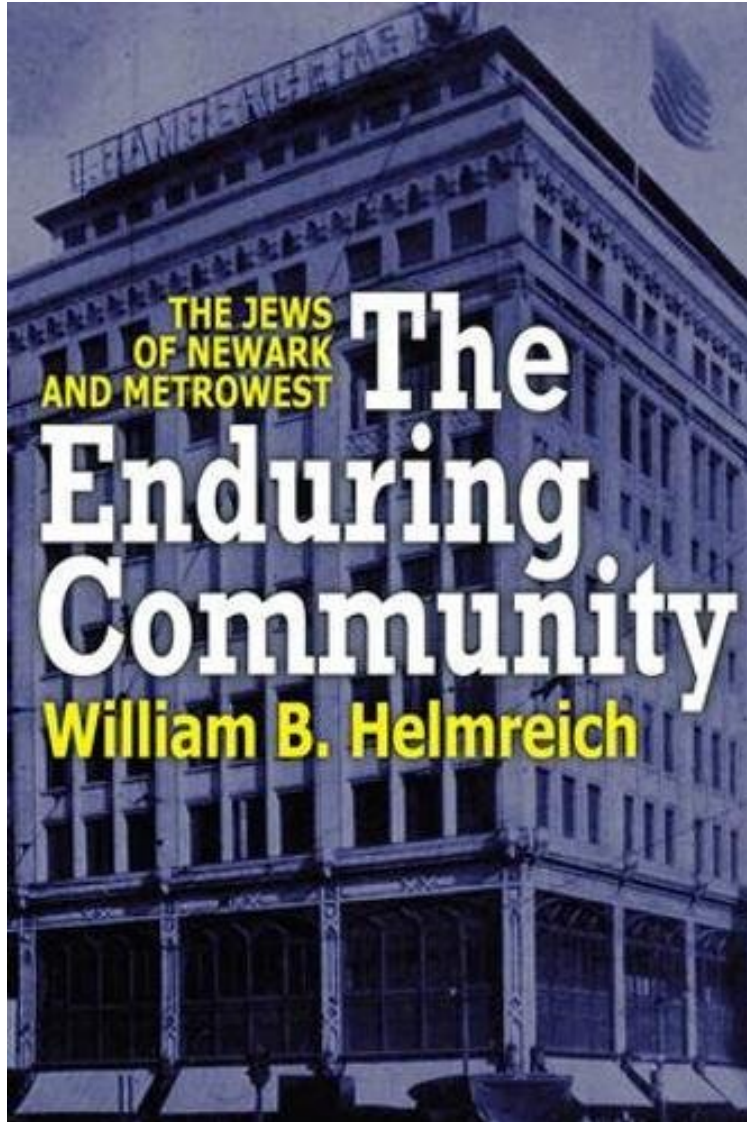


(Get free) The Enduring Community: The Jews of Newark and MetroWest

The Enduring Community: The Jews of Newark and MetroWest

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From its founding in the late seventeenth century, Newark, New Jersey, was a vibrant and representative center of Jewish life in America. Geographically and culturally situated between New York City and its outlying suburbs, Newark afforded Jewish residents the advantages of a close-knit community along with the cultural abundance and social dynamism of urban life. In Newark, all of the representative stages of modern Jewish experience were enacted, from immigration and acculturation to upward mobility and community building. *The Enduring Community* is a lively and evocative social history of the Jewish presence in Newark as well as an examination of what Newark tells us about social assimilation, conflict and change. Grounded in documentary research, the volume makes extensive use of interviews and oral histories. The author traces the growth of the Jewish population in the pre-Revolutionary period to its settlement of German Jews in the 1840s and Eastern European Jews in the 1880s. Helmreich delineates areas of contention and cooperation between these groups and relates how an American identity was eventually forged within the larger ethnic mix of the city. Jewish population in politics, the establishment of Jewish schools, synagogues, labor unions, charities, and community groups are described together with cultural and recreational life. Despite the formal and emotional bonds that formed over a century, Jewish neighborhoods in Newark did not survive the postwar era. The trek to the suburbs, the erosion of Newark's tax base, and deteriorating services accelerated a movement outward that mirrored the demographic patterns of cities across America. By the time of the Newark riots in 1967, the Jewish presence was largely absent. This volume reclaims a lost history and gives personalized voice to the dreams, aspirations, and memories of a dispersed community. It demonstrates how former Newarkers built new Jewish communities in the surrounding suburbs, an area dubbed "MetroWest" by Jewish leaders. *The Enduring Community* is must reading for students of Jewish social history, sociologists, urban studies specialists, and readers interested in the history of New Jersey. The book includes archival photographs from the periods discussed.

In this sociological study, Helmreich examines the ability of Newark's Jewish community to maintain its identity even after it had dispersed in the wake of urban decay to a ring of towns covering six counties west of the metropolitan center. He attributes endurance of religious-ethnic affiliation in new, decentralized settings to the strength of organizations left over from the original settlement, but he also questions the type of identity in the new environment. Helmreich views Jews as having struggled for equal opportunities to live, play, and work where they want and to be melded into a white, middle-class American consensus, but thereby losing their distinctive vitality as a community. He goes beyond the usual formula, however, by pointedly raising contemporary issues suggested by the Newark and MetroWest experience: attitudes toward intermarriage, loyalties to Israel, decline of neighborhood bonds, handling of tense intergroup relations, and organizational responses to Jewish diversification. He warns about the "bifurcation" of American Jewry into divergent poles of orthodox and unaffiliated and calls for a strong organizational response to educate and reconnect unaffiliated Jews. This book is not a narrow local history; rather, it is a broad social study inviting comparison and sober consideration of the future. All levels. S. J. Bronner, *Choice* "In writing such a complete and warm account of Jewish Newark, Helmreich richly nourishes that nostalgia and raises interesting questions as to how to maintain and encourage solidarity in the face of assimilation and suburban life." Patricia M. Ard, *American Jewish History* "I found William Helmreich's book on the history of Newark and its Jewish residents fascinating, especially since I was one of them for ten years. I recommend his book to everyone interested in the history of the Jewish community of Newark." Edward I. Koch, former mayor of New York City

About the Author William B. Helmreich is professor of sociology at CUNY Graduate Center and City College of New York and served as director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Queens College. He is author of eleven books, including *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of American Orthodoxy* and *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America*, which won the 1993 National Jewish Book Award.