

New Lives, New Challenges: Jewish Immigration and the Aid That Answered

Guiding Question: Why did Jewish Americans create organizations to support new immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s? How did these organizations work to meet the needs of new immigrants? How did they reflect larger trends in society during the Progressive Era?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will consider three examples of Jewish organizations that attempted to assist recent Jewish immigrants (or people desiring to **immigrate**).

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- › Research and analyze the work of three Jewish American organizations;
- › Explore how Jewish American organizations addressed social, political, and humanitarian issues in their communities; and
- › Discuss how these organizations reflected larger trends of their era.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Newspaper article, “German Refugees Cannot Discover Welcome Abroad”
The Jackson Sun, May 30, 1939

<https://newspapers.ushmm.org/historical-article/1939-german-refugees-cannot-discover-welcome-abroad-46926>

Newspaper article, “Maids and Matrons”
The Milwaukee Journal, January 7, 1897

Newspaper article, “To Jerusalem by Way of American Farms”
The San Francisco Call, August 25, 1907
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1907-08-25/ed-1/seq-16/>

SECONDARY SOURCES

Article, Jane McMaster, “The Galveston Movement: A Historical Overview of Jewish Immigration (1907–1914)”

Texas State Historical Association

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/galveston-movement>

Article, “Jews in Wisconsin”

Wisconsin Historical Society

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1872>

Article, “Roots of Milwaukee’s Settlement House”

Wisconsin 101, University of Wisconsin

<https://wi101.wisc.edu/roots-of-the-settlement-house/>

Article, “*Voyage of the St. Louis*”

Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/voyage-of-the-st-louis>

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- › Research Assignments One through Three

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- › Organize the class into groups of three to four students each.
- › Make copies of the Research Assignments so that each student has an assignment.
- › Preview all materials for appropriateness for your students.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: REVIEWING IMMIGRATION PATTERNS (10 MINUTES)

- › Lead a class discussion about Jewish immigration to the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Ask the students:
 - » *What do you know about the history of Jewish people immigrating to the United States?*
 - » *What are some reasons why Jewish people left Southern and Eastern Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s to come to the United States? What did these immigrants seek in the United States?*
 - » *What were some of the challenges Jewish immigrants faced upon arriving in the U.S.?*

ACTIVITY TWO: PROVIDING AID TO IMMIGRANTS (45 MINUTES)

- › Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- › Assign each group one of three research topics (repeat topics as needed for larger classes).
- › Explain that each group will explore one historical moment when a group of Jewish people came (or attempted to come) to the United States. They will also research an organization that sought to address the needs of immigrants.
- › Distribute copies of the Research Assignments so that all students in the group have a copy.
 - » Ask students to read the article in section A for historical context. When more than one article is available, students should split their group and share what they learned.
- › Give students time to share what they have learned and ask any relevant questions.
- › Move students to Section B, the primary source newspaper articles. When more than one article is available, students should split their group and share what they learned.
 - » **Teacher Tip:** The newspaper articles vary in length and complexity and can be used to differentiate the classroom.
- › Explain that newspaper articles show one moment in time. In Section C, we are asking students to research and learn more about an organization created by Jewish Americans to help immigrants (or those who desire to immigrate). Direct students to use the starter sources provided, but not to be limited to them.
- › Circulate and assist students as they research and complete their organizers.
- › Ask students to share what they have learned by presenting to the whole class or small groups.

TEACHER NOTE

The following articles in this volume will provide additional context:

- › Hasia Diner, “Jewish American History in Global Context” offers a helpful overview.
- › Hannah Zaves-Greene, “Just to Get Here: American Arrivals, Immigration, Exclusion, Disability, and Legislation” can help frame discussions about the challenges that newly arrived Jews (and Jews living in the United States) faced.
- › Beth Wenger, “The Evolution of American Jewish Philanthropy” can help provide context about the establishment of aid societies.

ACTIVITY THREE: CONCLUSION (10 MINUTES)

- › Lead a discussion (as a whole class or in small groups). Questions may include:
 - » *How did these organizations work to meet the needs of people who needed help?*
 - » *How do organizations today try to assist people in need?*
 - » *How did these organizations reflect broader trends in what was happening in their communities?*
 - » *How did Jewish organizations respond to issues of immigration, antisemitism, and discrimination?*
 - » *Why are these organizations important to Jewish American history?*

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- › Teachers can collect and assess the Research Assignments or assess oral presentations.
- › Students can choose one of the discussion questions and leave a written or verbal exit ticket.

Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- › **Founding of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) (1881)**
- › **The Settlement Movement (1890s–1920s)**
- › **Jane Addams and Chicago's Hull House**
- › **Lizzie Black Kander**
- › **The Settlement Cookbook**
- › **The Galveston Movement (1907–1914)**
- › **Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston, Texas**

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT ONE

HISTORICAL EVENT: RUSSIAN JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO MILWAUKEE (1890s–1910s)

Jewish American Aid Organization: Ladies Relief Sewing Society

Specific Initiative: “Keep Clean Mission”

Key Leaders: Lizzie Black Kander

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Article, “Jews in Wisconsin”

Wisconsin Historical Society

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1872>

Article, “Roots of Milwaukee’s Settlement House”

Wisconsin 101, University of Wisconsin

<https://wi101.wisc.edu/roots-of-the-settlement-house/>

B. PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Newspaper Article, “Maids and Matrons”

The Milwaukee Journal [Milwaukee, Wisconsin], January 7, 1897

Transcript of article

The virtues of soap and water are being taught by a band of Jewish women of this city who are conducting what they call the Keep Clean mission, which tries to inculcate better ideas of personal hygiene among the Russian Jews. At the head of the mission is Mrs. Lizzie Kander, wife of School Commissioner Kander. Mrs. Kander some months ago was elected president of the Jewish Ladies' society, a charitable organization, and since that time she has been branching out in new lines of work, teaching the women and girls how to sew and impressing upon the children the virtue that lies next to godliness. Their faces and hands clean, Mrs. Kander next introduced her charges to the school book and the kindergarten, and from a class of twelve she now has a school of fifty which meets in the Temple on Tenth and Cedar streets on Tuesday afternoons. A number of ladies are assisting Mrs. Kander in her work, and the Keep Clean mission is becoming a thriving institution.

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RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT ONE (CONT.)

Analysis of Newspaper Article

What details does the newspaper article provide about the people trying to enter the United States? Who are they? Where are they coming from?

How does the newspaper describe the Jewish immigrants? What words or tone does the writer use? Do you think the article is sympathetic, neutral, or critical? Why?

What challenges or obstacles are mentioned in the newspaper article about their journey or arrival? Are legal, political, or social issues mentioned? How are the immigrants being received?

Which perspective(s) are represented in the newspaper article? Which perspective(s) are missing?

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT ONE (CONT.)

C. POSSIBLE RESEARCH SOURCES TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Student Note: You are not limited to these resources. When you find a good source, use the links on the page to find other potentially helpful sources.

Article, Kimberly Voss, "Women's Clubs"

Encyclopedia of Milwaukee

<https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/womens-clubs/>

Article, Angela Fritz, "Settlements"

Encyclopedia of Milwaukee

<https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/settlements/>

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT ONE (CONT.)

Analysis of Aid Provided to Immigrants

What was the mission of the Ladies Relief Sewing Society? What is the Keep Clean mission?

What specific actions did the organization take during that time to respond to the needs of immigrants? Look for details that show how the organization was involved in the same or similar events or issues.

What challenges did the organization face in trying to help immigrants during that historical moment? Consider public opinion, government policies, or financial limitations.

How does this organization reflect larger trends in society during the late 1800s and early 1900s?

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO

HISTORICAL EVENT: GALVESTON MOVEMENT (1907–1914)

Jewish American Aid Organization: Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau

Key Leaders: **Rabbi** Henry Cohen of Congregation B'nai Israel

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Article, Jane McMaster, "The Galveston Movement: A Historical Overview of Jewish Immigration (1907-1914)"

Texas State Historical Association

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/galveston-movement>

B. PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Newspaper article, "To Jerusalem by Way of American Farms"

The San Francisco Call, August 25, 1907

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STUDENT TIPS

1. Use the link to zoom in on the article and make it easier to read, or consult the transcript.
2. This newspaper article uses the term "Jewish race." While this term was used at the time, it is not one we use today. When discussing the article, remember to use the term "Jewish people" or "Jewish immigrants" when referring to the historical subjects.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

Newspaper article, "To Jerusalem by Way of American Farms"

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RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

Transcript of article

TO JERUSALEM BY WAY OF AMERICAN FARMS

The Big Scheme of Which the Recent Landing of Russian Jews at Galveston Is a Part

By C.H. Abbott

Galveston, Texas, Aug. 19

The spirit of a single line in an ancient **Hebrew** prayer has been wafted over the world. Once it was meaningless; now it is significant. For centuries up to a few years ago it was repeated [sic] nightly by millions of the scattered nation. Now with less repetition it has come to be more perfunctory.

“May next year see me in Jerusalem” is the literal translation.

Those of the Jewish race who have met death in the persecutions in Russia have been sacrificed to the end of a quickened racial instinct. From the sentiment aroused has sprung a movement almost magnificent in its scope.

The return to Zion, according to scripture, is to be accomplished before the end of the world. Within recent years a great society was organized to stimulate the migration. Many have already made the journey, but the number is comparatively small. First, it has been declared, the Jews must be led out of the darkness.

Israel Zangwill has taken up the work as Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt. Gradually developing, as the racial instinct grows, a more pronounced policy has been evolved. It is that of a vast brotherhood.

There they were met by others of their race. Helped through the formalities attendant upon the operation of the immigration laws they were transported to the headquarters provided. There they bathed and were feasted. Within 48 hours every one was on his way to a new home in the new land provided for him long in advance.

The episode represented one of the greatest philanthropic events of the century. Those of the race who have won fortunes and prominence in the western hemisphere are contributing millions for the upbuilding of the race. That the Jews may not be crowded together in some great center of population immigration has been diverted to Galveston. From there these people are being distributed over that section of the United States where room is allowed for the expansion of character and opportunities are given for the broadening of hope.

The idea is based upon the supposition that only by the actual elevation of the race may be the Jews of the world ever be assembled again in Palestine. The “next year” of the prayer does not represent 12 months or 365 days, but an epoch. Only, it is said, through suffering and torment may people emerge strong and magnificent. Word of the persecutions in Russia was spread over the world. Sentiment was aroused and by its power the racial instinct has been made still more vigorous. Those who fell met death more horrible than did the Christian martyrs in the Roman arena, but for every drop of Jewish blood that was shed the race was rewarded.

The Jews were led out of Egypt after they had been compelled to make bricks without straw. In those magnificent ruins along the Nile are to be found structures today in which the material of building is the sort described in the Old Testament.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

The great society was organized that the Hebrews may be led out of darkened Russia. No sea opens to let them pass, but in great steamers the exodus has been directed toward America. Israel Zangwill is one of the leaders. As president of the Jewish territorial organization, one of the believers in the Zionist movement and a man of remarkable influence among his people, he has lent approval and aid to the effort that brought to Galveston the refugees from the land of oppression.

The history of the race shows it to be strong in adversity. Those Jews who live in America and western Europe are providing the leaders. Zion may be the ultimate destination, but the United States is a stopping point en route. In the western hemisphere the leaders plan the race may be fitted for the return to Palestine.

To the end expressed in the ancient Hebrew prayer many agencies are working. Primarily the idea is to relieve distress and as such the labor is philanthropic. In this response the race has been welded more closely together. Those of the scattered tribes have been made to feel the awakening instinct of racial unity. It professes in the ration that marks the horror of the persecution.

History, recorded before the time of Christ, is being repeated. Those Jews who come to America under the care of the great Hebrew societies organized with the development of the racial sentiment are on their way to Canaan.

Where There Is Room

The first idea conceived was for the colonization of these Jews in the parts of the early where room was offered and the opportunity appeared. With many that same plan still is cherished. With others a different idea is evolved.

A few years ago President Roosevelt expressed himself in a public document upon the problem of immigration. "It is not so much immigration that we of the United States have to fear," he explained, "as it is the concentration of the immigrants."

The New York ghetto is an example. There, in a condition scarcely better than in the far away lands across the ocean, the Jews are living, speaking only their own language, following customs that have not tended to advancement and existing in surroundings that did not add to their progress or prosperity.

Jacob Schiff, the great banker, appreciated the situation. Dr. Nathan had been sent to Russia to investigate conditions in the districts where persecution had been most vigorous and by his recitals the leader was inspired to come to the help of his people. Originally he planned to help Jews departing from New York. For seven years the work progressed. Some 35,000 were sent to the west.

But while 35,000 were finding new homes among more healthy surroundings many times that number were coming to take the place of the departed. The society adopted a new policy. Agents were sent to Europe, that the movement might be diverted. It was not planned to concentrate those of the race who might elect to come to America in any seaport city, but rather to move them inland to the growing towns of the west—scatter them where the air was fresh and the demand for producers was greatest.

This idea was approved by Israel Zangwill and the parent organization. Whenever an agent of the branch society heard of a Hebrew in stricken Russia who planned a journey to America he called upon him.

"Go to Galveston," he advised. "Join us and find a home in the west."

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

It was cheaper, though a longer steamer trip to the southern seaport and the responses came readily enough. To those who journeyed to the point selected transportation was furnished to some place where work awaited them.

It was a party of these Jews that arrived last week. It was a colony that is not to be colonized. Back of the movement was the now significant expression of the prayer—"May next year see me in Jerusalem."

This separation is counted as the best means for the improvement of the race, that each individual so assisted to a home may join in the greater movement, feel for himself the quickening pulse of racial sentiment and be enlisted in an endeavor that means the ultimate consummation—the reassembling of the Jews in Palestine.

The development of the movement, as expressed by the Galveston example, indicates its scope. Coming from New York was I.D. Waldman, as the active agent of the real leader. He was joined by Jacob Billikopf, superintendent of the Federated Jewish Charities of Kansas City.

They selected headquarters and commenced preparation for the reception of the refugees, but a fire broke out and the building chosen was destroyed. Another was leased. It was a large structure of two floors. Partitions were erected and an office installed. It was equipped with shower baths and a kitchen occupied a part of the space. Meanwhile the assistance of agents in almost every city of the west was solicited. Fifty-four of the Zangwellites were coming and a place was made for each. The growing cities and towns of the west and southwest sent news of their urgent needs, and among these the newcomers were divided, because the demand was far greater than the supply. For all through the west the cry is for more workers. The great unilled acres of Texas and Oklahoma and Kansas, recently opened by the rapid growth of railroad systems, need settlers, and the towns springing into existence along the new lines need helpers of every kind. Here then is the demand, but it is for millions.

And so every preparation for the reception of the small band of pioneers, from the moment they stepped from the ship for medical examination to the time when they should find a home and work awaiting them in some inland center of population, was made.

The appeal to quickened race feeling inspired by Russian persecution found a ready response over the entire United States. The immigrants also were impressed.

A Gentile captain commanded the Cassel and he saved coal. The ship bearing among the 875 steerage passengers the little band of 54 Jews was one day late in reaching port and it cost the North German Lloyd company just \$1,600. On June 31 the old immigration law, fixing a head tax of \$2 on each passenger, expired. The new law increased the tax to \$4.

Comfort and Happiness

Few of the Jews knew about the extra expense each represented, but still fewer looked, as they appeared in the first manifest, as if they would have been guilty of false economy. Dressed in the picturesque garb of the land from which they came, they marched down the gangplank, faced the authorities, opened their baggage for inspection and were assembled in an apartment separate from the others.

It was a babble of tongues, but while they were speaking in German, Yiddish, and Polish they laughed all alike. "America" in a dozen different accents sounds always like "America." The pilgrims were talking about the new land.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

When Rabbi Cohen told them to stand up, all rose. When Mr. Waldman called a name, its possessor stepped forward. When Mr. Billikopf translated the command of the customs inspector to open all luggage, they obeyed quickly. Some kneeled to untie hard knots with their teeth.

The records were approved. A wagon drove to the pier. Into it the pilgrims were directed and they rose off past the great elevators, through the railroad yard, by the passenger station and to the barracks.

The sound of splashing came from the bathrooms. It had been three weeks since any of the party had enjoyed a fresh water event of this nature. It wrought a transformation. High Russian boots that had been worn outside went inside of wide Russian trousers. Blouses and shirts that had once waved full length in the breeze were stowed away in the manner of an American.

The mayor arrived and was introduced as the burgomaster. Russian hats dusted the floor.

“Obey the law, he exclaimed in English, “and you will find America the place of contentment.”

An interpreter repeated the message. Again the listeners bowed.

One of the number stepped forward. His tongue rattled and then the response was offered.

“We are so grateful,” it was explained, “that if it was ever necessary we would give our lives to this country.”

The mayor shook hands with every peasant. Wherever he went the people, so long subservient, bowed low before him. After he departed there was a rush for postal cards. Around a long table they clustered, marking in the most peculiar script the message to friends in Russia.

“They’re telling about meeting the burgomaster,” explained the interpreter. “In Russia they might wait for weeks before they could see such a personage.”

The postals were mailed. Faces upon which were marks of previous suffering broke into smiles. The refugees from Russia were in America and were being helped to gain a foothold in a free country.

Some of those who came to America still bore upon their backs the scars of wounds suffered during the persecution. Under whips they had been driven and knives had been sheathed in their bodies. One was an escaped political prisoner, who, by bribery, had found safety in Germany, just as by work he expects to find fortune in America. He was a locksmith, but likewise a student. He was chairman of the revolutionary committee, and in his house were the records. One night, at about 2 o’clock, soldiers, officers and guards surrounded the place. A traitor had disclosed the secrets.

Until daylight the soldiers searched, while the locksmith cowered in a cor...

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

Analysis of Newspaper Article

What details does the newspaper article provide about the people trying to enter the United States? Who are they? Where are they coming from?

How does the newspaper describe the Jewish immigrants? What words or tone does the writer use? Do you think the article is sympathetic, neutral, or critical? Why?

What challenges or obstacles are mentioned in the newspaper article about their journey or arrival? Are legal, political, or social issues mentioned? How are the immigrants being received?

Which perspective(s) are represented in the newspaper article? Which perspective(s) are missing?

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

C. POSSIBLE RESEARCH SOURCES TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

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Article, Jacob Schiff, “The Galveston Movement”

My Jewish Learning

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-galveston-movement/>

Article, Katharine Shilcut, “The Other Ellis Island”

Rice Magazine, Spring 2020

<https://magazine.rice.edu/spring-2020/other-ellis-island>

Online exhibit, *From the Pale to the Golden Land*

The Museum of Family History

<https://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/imm-galveston.htm>

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT TWO (CONT.)

Analysis of Aid Provided to Immigrants

What was the mission of the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau? What was the Galveston Movement?

What specific actions did the organization take during that time to respond to the needs of immigrants? Look for details that show how the organization was involved in the same or similar events or issues.

What challenges did the organization face in trying to help immigrants during that historical moment? Consider public opinion, government policies, or financial limitations.

How does this organization reflect larger trends in society during the early 1900s?

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT THREE

HISTORICAL EVENT: THE ST. LOUIS (1939)

Jewish American Aid Organization: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Article, "Voyage of the *St. Louis*"

Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/voyage-of-the-st-louis>

B. PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Newspaper Article, "German Refugees Cannot Discover Welcome Abroad"

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German Refugees Cannot Discover Welcome Abroad

Committee Asks Reich To Control Departure More Strictly

WASHINGTON, May 30—(AP)— While three trans-Atlantic ships sought today to discharge more than 1,000 unwanted German refugees at Caribbean ports, word reached here that the inter-governmental committee for refugees in London had requested the reich to exercise stricter control over their departure.

The committee asked Nazi officials not to let refugees leave unless it was certain they would be permitted to land in the country of destination.

From New York came word that representatives of Jewish organizations expected to fly to Cuba to confer with President Laredo Bru about 927 refugees aboard the liner San Luis at Havana.

The ship arrived Saturday with 943 refugees. According to information reaching the state department, only 16 of them have the necessary papers with which to land.

American representatives hoped to induce authorities to let the refugees land in Cuba and then go to the Isle of Pines to make their homes.

Meantime, the British liner Orduna was en route from Havana to Panama and Chile hoping to disembark 72 refugees whom the Cuban authorities would not permit to land after 48 were disembarked.

The French liner Flandres was en route to Vera Cruz, Mexico, with 180 refugees after having landed 32 in Havana.

The refugees who were disembarked in Cuba had not only the necessary permits but also \$500 each to deposit with the Cuban government as a guarantee they would not become public charges.

Transcript of article

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How does the newspaper describe the Jewish immigrants? What words or tone does the writer use? Do you think the article is sympathetic, neutral, or critical? Why?

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Which perspective(s) are represented in the newspaper article? Which perspective(s) are missing?

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT THREE (CONT.)

C. POSSIBLE RESEARCH SOURCES TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Student Note: You are not limited to these resources. When you find a good source, use the links on the page to find other potentially helpful sources.

Article, "The Story of the S.S. *St. Louis* (1939)"

JDC Archives

<https://archives.jdc.org/topic-guides/the-story-of-the-s-s-st-louis/>

Article, "Transatlantic Liner *St. Louis*"

Chalmers Library, Kenyon College

https://digital.kenyon.edu/bulmash_stlouis/

Online exhibit, *Americans and the Holocaust*

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main/the-st-louis-voyage?query=st+louis>

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT THREE (CONT.)

Analysis of Aid Provided to Immigrants

What was the mission of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)?

What specific actions did the organization take during that time to respond to the needs of immigrants, particularly those fleeing Germany and Eastern Europe? Look for details that show how the organization was involved in the same or similar events or issues.

What challenges did the organization face in trying to help immigrants during that historical moment? Consider public opinion, government policies, or financial limitations.

How does this organization reflect larger trends in society during the early 1930s?
