



*June Flowers, by Rose Cecil O'Neill, from the cover of Puck, May 31, 1905.*

*Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 34 (Summer 2011): 142-55

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# WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE ATTENDS A LAWRENCE JEWISH WEDDING, 1887

by David M. Katzman

**W**illiam Allen White, the “Sage of Emporia,” “was nationally known,” in the words of historian Sally Foreman Griffith, “and widely beloved as an author, political leader, and social commentator.” A Pulitzer Prize winner for editorial writing in the *Emporia Gazette*, which he owned and edited from 1895 until his death in 1944, and posthumous Pulitzer recipient for *The Autobiography of William Allen White*, he epitomized Middle America in the first half of the twentieth century. Among the sources of his continued renown are the widely anthologized editorial opposing the Populists, “What’s the Matter With Kansas?” (1896), and his eulogy on the death of his daughter, “Mary White” (1921), both required reading for generations of high-school students, and his courageous opposition to the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and rejection of midwestern isolationism in the 1930s. White was probably the most famous small-town newspaper editor of his time, and his story, as Griffith has suggested in her excellent study of White and the *Emporia Gazette*, is a window to understanding the role of the newspaper in American communities. This article explores an incident that took place early in White’s reporting career and, through it, examines the relationship between community journalism and local advertisers. Specifically, White’s attempt to cover a local wedding sheds light on the connection that existed between local reporting and Lawrence’s nineteenth-century German-Jewish merchant community.<sup>1</sup>

White learned his craft early, when, as a teenager and a student at the College of Emporia and then the University of Kansas, he worked first at newspapers in El Dorado and later as a cub reporter and stringer for a number of other papers. In 1887, as a part-time reporter for the *Lawrence Journal*, the nineteen-year-old White accepted an assignment to cover the wedding of the daughter of a Lawrence Jewish merchant. Though Kansas was officially dry at the time, alcohol was widely available, and champagne flowed freely at the wedding celebration. It was White’s first encounter with the bubbly wine and he had too much to drink. It was a humbling experience because he not only got drunk but also did not complete his assignment, leaving his editor to finish the paper’s account of the House wedding.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press), 3–9; White, *The Autobiography of William Allen White* (New York: MacMillan, 1946).

2. On liquor as readily available in dry Kansas, see Robert Smith Bader, *Prohibition in Kansas: A History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 63–89. Kate Field, a leading U.S. journalist, toured Kansas in 1887. Opposed to prohibition, she bought liquor in Kansas and reported seeing open bars. White’s and Field’s experiences bring to mind Ring Lardner’s quip in the 1920s: “Prohibition was better than no liquor at all.” Gary Scharnhorst, *Kate Field: The Many Lives of a Nineteenth-Century American Journalist* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 174, 194–95.



*Before William Allen White was the nationally known editor of the Emporia Gazette, which he owned and edited from 1895 until his death in 1944, he worked as a cub reporter for a number of Kansas newspapers. In 1887, while working part time for the Lawrence Journal, the nineteen-year-old White was sent to cover the wedding of the daughter of a local Jewish merchant. The champagne served at the celebration in "dry" Kansas got the better of White, pictured here between 1890 and 1895, and his editor was left to finish the paper's account of the wedding.*

White's experience at the Jewish wedding was an important enough event in his life that he recorded it in detail in his *Autobiography*:

... [Vernon] Kellogg and I had aspirations, noble ideals about the [newspaper] profession, that amused [editor] Jim [Dennis]. We tried to stop the habit of printing, at the end of a wedding notice, a list of all the gifts that the bride received. The bride's family and friends liked to see it in print; but Vernon and I thought it was unethical. Jim, because the lists of bridal presents came in early and helped him get up the morning paper in time to quit shortly after

midnight, loved them; and we had to fight with him to keep them out.

One evening the Houses, who ran the clothing store, put on a big wedding for their daughter. They were Jewish people, and to them a wedding was a great ceremonial. Vernon and I, representing the press, were invited to the wedding, at their home; and they rented the Odd Fellows Hall for a gorgeous dinner and dance afterward. We heard three days ahead about that dinner from the grocery boys and their hired girl friends, and from the expressman who was bringing delicacies from Kansas City to the home; a crate of lobsters, for instance, and venison and molded ice cream—a new confection in the eighties—and a wedding cake four feet high. Kellogg and I hurried through our evening chores, omitting the wedding at the home and getting to the Odd Fellows Hall about half past nine or ten, in time for the dance and dinner. Socially, we were innocent youngsters. Kellogg's father had been a college president, a probate judge, and now was a state senator. My father and mother had entertained Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They had also entertained John P. St. John, the father of Kansas Prohibition in the seventies, who had run for President in 1884 on the Prohibition ticket and had taken enough votes from Blaine to give New York to Mr. Cleveland and so win the election for him. I set these things down here because they paint in our background, Kellogg's and mine, in Bacchic knowledge. It is hard to believe, but, having grown up in Prohibition Kansas and in families devoted to that cause, we hardly knew beer from whiskey, had not yet identified brandy, knew no difference between the various kinds of wine. We understood that wine was the product of the grape. It was all rum to us, or maybe gin—sinful, alcoholic tools of the rum fiend, low products of the grogshop.

Anyway, the Houses were good advertisers in the Lawrence Journal. They turned in their list of wedding presents and, with Spartan determination and Puritan resolve not to be bribed by advertisers, we carefully omitted the list of wedding presents from our wedding



*Jacob and Frederica House's home, at 805 Ohio Street in Lawrence, was the venue for Mary House's marriage to John Adler of New York City. The Houses owned one of Lawrence's two largest clothing stores; Adler's family owned and operated a chain of well-known shoe stores in New York. The House home, built by Jacob House in 1884 and pictured here in a photo by local photographer Alfred Lawrence probably some time in the 1920s, was sold in 1902 to Dr. Charles J. Simmons, who used the property not as a residence but as the city's first private hospital—Simmons Hospital and Training School for Nurses. The home was later used as a fraternity house and serves today as apartments.*

notice, which we sent to Jim, the foreman. When we showed up at Odd Fellows Hall we were hungrier than she-wolves with cubs, ready for the lobster and the venison and the molded ice cream, little thinking that the devil was lurking in the dark windows of the Odd Fellows Hall waiting to bring us to shame.

By the time we had got to the dinner, the bridal party and the guests from all over that part of Kansas were seated at two long tables running the length of the room. We had two end seats, down near the front doors of the hall. Just beyond those front doors were our good friends, the Lawrence hack drivers on whose boxes we rode in proud state by day, to and from the railroad station where we collected the names of those who were coming into and going from the town. These hack drivers, in an outer vestibule, saw us sitting together at the end of the table. They were a few feet from

Vernon and me. They ate vicariously with joy the viands that the waitresses were passing to us.

We noticed that the waitresses poured into our tumblers some new kind of soda water, which went tingling up our noses and was not so very good. But we were tired and thirsty after a day's work, as well as hungry. And the waitress filled our glasses again with that belchy stuff. Also, we noticed that, the third time our glasses were emptied, the hack drivers in the hall signaled to the waitress to fill them up again, which we felt was mighty decent of the hack drivers. Again, as we stowed away the venison and the lobster and the cakes and the exotic fruits that loaded the table, we drank that new soda water—clear and sparkling. As the meal grew old I noticed that Kellogg, ordinarily a gentle soul with a soft ingratiating voice, was talking raucously, and it seemed to

me perhaps a bit bawdily, to the bride at the other end of the hall, making great merriment. I don't know whether or not he noticed any symptoms in me, but that soda water was taking hold of both of us. I wanted to play the piano and was restrained by Kellogg, who always had a maternal influence upon me. The next thing I recall, after these more than fifty years, is that the tables were gone and the orchestra from Kansas City, which included a harp, a flute, two violins, a cello, and a bass viol, was playing what seemed to me the most exquisite waltz music I had ever heard. And I wanted to dance. But because I had always played for dances, I had not learned to waltz. I could not, but I saw Kellogg floating down the long hall and in his arms rested Mrs. House, the bride's mother—a large lady whom Kellogg's arms only partially encircled. She was having the time of her life, and Kellogg was struggling nobly to do the honors. It was a great occasion. I believe I made a short speech, and I know that I tried to get to the rattletrap old piano on the platform where the orchestra stood, and was persuaded by Kellogg, and perhaps by the bride's father, to join a square dance at which I was good. I took the bride out, and the bride's cousins, and a very pretty black-eyed girl from Kansas City—a veritable sylph, a wood nymph—and I danced on air with her two or three times.

At least Kellogg and I were having an altogether deliriously happy time. Only Kellogg, whose sense of duty was always keener than mine, seemed to have a seven-devil lust to do the right thing by the Houses, who were good advertisers. So he took the bride's two aunts, one after the other, and each more ponderous than the other, down the hall in a schottische—a military schottische where you ran two steps, clinched, turned around a couple of times, and ran two steps more. And Kellogg was the belle of the ball, and the hack drivers, still standing in the door, laughed nosily, even rudely it seemed to me, at Kellogg, who obviously was doing the honors of the Lawrence Journal. What there was to laugh at, I could not see at the time; I stepped up to rebuke them in a loud voice, and they laughed again. But I didn't care. Who was I to rebuke

them! Perhaps that was Mr. House's duty. He was the host. So I hurried off to the hour of the melting brown eyes from Kansas City and gave her a whirl in "Old Dan Tucker." It was long after midnight when Kellogg and I, realizing that we had a day's work ahead of us, beginning at eight o'clock, withdrew from the merry party, parted the wall of hack drivers in the hall as Moses smote the waters in the Red Sea, and started down Massachusetts Street for home.

It was a moonlight night, and the street was deserted. I wanted to sing, and Kellogg said, "Hell, yes, let's sing!" We walked for half a block, arm in arm, singing "Larboard Watch, Ahoy," and then turned out into the street and lifted our voices in another duet, "Oh Alice, Where Art Thou?" and then "Bye, Baby, Bye, Oh, Why Do You Cry, Oh!" and then yodeled at the moon. And as we turned west to leave the street, old man Phillips, the town night marshal, in his blue army uniform, came running to catch up with us and said, tapping each of us on the shoulder:

"Oh, my dear young gentlemen, don't you think you could sing as well if you stayed on the sidewalk?" And then he added, deprecatingly under his breath: "Don't you boys know you're drunk?"

We had been drinking champagne, and, God help us, we thought it was soda water! So we went home and to bed, only to wake up in shame and sorrow. For the wages of sin is death. Old Jim Dennis had slipped down to the reporters' room, fished the bride's list of presents out of the wastebasket, and run it in spite of us, knowing from the hack drivers late in the evening that we were too happy to return to see the proof.

In my shame at seeing the list of the bride's presents follow the wedding notice of an advertiser—certainly a special privilege flaunted before the town—in the dejection of a raging headache, it was borne into my heart's core that there is a moral government of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

3. White, *Autobiography*, 164–67.



*The Houses, White recalled in his Autobiography, “were Jewish people, and to them a wedding was a great ceremonial.” To finish his “evening chores” at the paper, White skipped the ceremony at the House home and attended only the “gorgeous dinner and dance” at the Odd Fellows Hall after the nuptials. “We heard three days ahead about that dinner from the grocery boys and their hired girl friends,” White wrote, “and from the expressman who was bringing delicacies from Kansas City to the home; a crate of lobsters, for instance, and venison and molded ice cream—a new confection in the eighties—and a wedding cake four feet high.” Had he attended the wedding, White would have entered the House home through its grand hallway, pictured here courtesy of the Watkins Museum, Lawrence, Kansas.*

**W**hy was this story so important to White? Why did he give so much space in his *Autobiography* to this anecdote? It is, after all, a good tale, revealing some personal humility. And, as Sally Griffith has noted, White’s *Autobiography* can be read as a Horatio Alger story. White’s story of getting drunk and failing to reform the paper’s wedding reporting—to end what he and some others considered an expression of crass materialism, of kowtowing to local advertisers’ egos—expresses the newspaperman’s ideals, even as it shows him, however inadvertently, working against them. His intention to introduce some objectivity in local news coverage and to end newspapers’ pandering to local elites was noble but he tripped on his own youthful indulgence. Moreover, as Griffith has also emphasized, White was quite conscious of the influential roles local newspapers and editors played in the age before radio, television, and the Internet. As a powerful institution in small towns,

papers determined what was newsworthy; they claimed to represent public opinion before the age of polling. White’s *Autobiography*, then, is not only his personal story but also that of the press, especially local print media in a rapidly changing society in which Middle America itself was being remade.<sup>4</sup> White’s experience at the House wedding demonstrates some of the ways in which America was changing toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The space given to the House wedding in White’s *Autobiography* also reflected, in part, how important covering life cycle events, especially weddings, was in

4. *Ibid.*, 3–4. This story has personal meaning for the author. Following the 1968 American Historical Association meeting in New York City, Professor Bill Tuttle and history chair and Professor W. Stitt Robinson recruited the author to visit the University of Kansas for a job interview. The author’s wife asked: “Is there a Jewish community in Lawrence?” Recalling White’s description of the House wedding in the autobiography, the author responded that there had been one in the nineteenth century. On moving to Lawrence they discovered a flourishing Jewish community present in the town.

local journalism. By the time White purchased the *Emporia Gazette* in 1895, having served his apprenticeship as a reporter in El Dorado, Lawrence, and Kansas City, and as an editor with the *Kansas City Star*, he had developed a good sense of the roles newspapers and their editors played in small towns. White built on that awareness when he introduced himself to the residents of Emporia, his native city, in his first *Gazette* editorial, "Entirely Personal," published on June 3, 1895: "To the gentle reader," White began, addressing them in a personal note. As *Gazette* editor, he was throwing in his lot with his readers and Emporia; he would grow old with them. He would be a "country editor," who would write "the wedding notices of the boys and girls in the schools; . . . announce the birth of the children who will some day honor Emporia, and . . . say the final words over those of middle age who read these lines." In other words, his relations with his fellow citizens were "to be close and personal." He went on to discuss other roles he intended to play—to boost the city, to uplift the townspeople, to present "public sentiment," to support Republicans—though he also reminded them "it is a plain business proposition. . . . He is in the newspaper business as he would be in the drygoods business—to make an honest living and to leave an honest name behind."<sup>5</sup>

In spelling out the life cycle events he would cover, White listed weddings first. Most commonly life cycle events are listed from birth to death. But in speaking directly to his new readers and neighbors, White personalized his list so that it started with weddings, the most widely celebrated of communal events, and in doing so he highlighted his intent to share in the everyday life of the town. But he may also have made weddings primary because of his experience at the House wedding and the lesson he learned there about how such events and their coverage in newspapers helped to define local communities. The journalist's role in covering local events like weddings was an ongoing concern for him. As the gatekeeper of what was newsworthy in Emporia, he sought to balance his desire to downplay the materialism expressed in wedding coverage that listed the presents couples received yet to continue to report on marriages in order to serve the needs of his advertisers and constituents.<sup>6</sup>

5. Reprinted in White, *Autobiography*, 260–61.

6. The debate over printing lists of wedding gifts had circulated in newspaper circles for decades. In 1879 a Lawrence newspaper picked up a story from the *New York Herald Tribune* headlined "Publishing Wedding Gifts." The *Tribune* story noted that it had become fashionable

On becoming publisher and editor of the *Emporia Gazette*, White abandoned the widespread custom of occasionally recording every wedding gift. I have not found a single instance of the *Gazette* doing so under White's editorship, though the paper did occasionally summarize the wedding presents or mention a special wedding gift. Indeed, the practice of listing every gift was dying out in newspapers at the time. Like other small-town newspapers, however, the *Gazette* did not treat all townspeople equally. Its reporting favored local business people, those with the greatest material interest in the paper. Its personal columns and coverage of life cycle events, for example, gave more extensive coverage to the families of local merchants, who were the paper's actual and potential advertisers, than to any other group. This was especially reflected in the *Gazette's* coverage of weddings.

On October 15, 1897, as one example, the *Emporia Gazette* reprinted a report from the *Kansas City Times* on the wedding of local merchant Sam Rosenfeldt to Fannie Cohn in Kansas City. The report listed many of those in attendance and mentioned that "the young couple were the recipients of many handsome and costly presents." Rosenfeldt had moved from Janesville, Wisconsin, to Emporia the previous year and become a partner in the locally owned Star Clothing Company, a frequent *Gazette* advertiser that often took out large display ads. Though editor White did not list the Rosenfeldts' wedding presents, he nonetheless gave extensive coverage to the event. On October 9 the *Gazette* announced the forthcoming wedding in its front-page personal item column. Two days later, again on the front page, it announced that Rosenfeldt had left for Kansas City. The next day the paper reported that Mr. and Mrs. A. Schlessinger had passed through Emporia on the way to the wedding and Mr. and Mrs. I. Newman had taken the train to Kansas City to attend. Schlessinger was the former proprietor of Star Clothing, and Newman its leading salesman. On the 15th the wedding story appeared, and on October 28, the *Gazette* reported the

to print "an inventory of the donations, with the names of donors; nor do we see any harm in the custom." It went on to report that the Fort Scott, Kansas, *Monitor* had printed "an inventory of the presents made to Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Griffin (colored) by their brethren and sisters of like descent." In a mocking tone, the paper quoted some of the gifts: "'Pig—Charles Blakey' and 'Pig—George Ray' may be a little monotonous; but 'Nice Cake—Mrs. Patterson' is far from being objectionable; nor should Mr. Walrath be despised, who gave a 'Handsome Wedding Necktie;' nor even Mr. Mackermere, who presented what he could, viz: 'Twenty-five Cents.'" *Republican Daily Journal* (Lawrence), March 8, 1879.



Nineteenth-century newspapers often went into great detail in their descriptions of wedding finery. The Lawrence Daily Journal's account of the House nuptials, for example, included a long list of ladies' silk, jet, and diamonds, as well as a thorough inventory of the couple's new silver, china, and volumes of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Of the House home the paper noted: "The large mansion was handsomely decorated. . . . The parlor where the ceremony took place was decorated with the rarest and choicest of flowers. From the ceiling was suspended a floral bell, made up of green fern, in which hyacinths[,] carnations, smilax, and the most royal of flowers, calla lilies, were artistically entwined. . . . Under the wedding bell the contracting parties took their stand, and the impressive ceremony was gone through with." Pictured here are similar decorations from a turn-of-the-century ceremony, including the floral bell garland popular at the time. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

return of the Rosenfeldts from their honeymoon in the East.<sup>7</sup>

Important non-merchant families also had their events well covered by the *Gazette*. The 1899 Taylor-Newman wedding was "one of the distinctive social events of the season," according to the *Gazette's* report. Jessica Taylor, daughter of the president of the State Normal School at Emporia, married Allen Newman of Clay Center. Two hundred guests attended the wedding at the bride's home, and the *Gazette* recorded in detail the decorations and flowers as well as the women's attire. The normal school band and mandolin club both entertained guests. The social standing of the Taylors led the *Gazette* to

7. *Emporia Gazette*, October 9, 11, 12, 15, 28, 1897. For display ads for Star Clothing, see, for example, December 11, 1896, and May 27, 1897. The author researched the *Emporia Gazette* through online digital collections, using keyword searches, like "wedding" and "marriages," as well as individual names like Rosenfeldt, Cohn, etc. The nineteenth-century Lawrence newspapers were not yet digitized, and were read on microfilm. The author thanks Phil Braverman for information on digitized newspapers.

set aside William Allen White's objections to listing wedding gifts: "The wedding presents were exceedingly beautiful," the paper reported. "The Normal faculty gave a chest of solid silver. One large table was entirely filled with solid silver, bric-a-brac and books."<sup>8</sup>

Reporting personal items—coming and going on trains, social parties, etc.—was the bread and butter of local journalism. As a young reporter in Lawrence, White had regularly gone to the station to record the arrival and departure of train travelers. Local items sold newspapers, contributed to a sense of shared community, and especially fed the egos of and satisfied the town merchants, the paper's regular local advertisers, who expected coverage of their activities. Local merchants, the heart of the commercial district in small-town America, considered themselves representative of the town. Thus the *Gazette's* coverage of those going to socially significant weddings was common.

If wedding reports potentially sold newspapers, then elopements were commercial disappointments to the newspaper and local merchants. Newspapers did carry reports of an occasional elopement, and White once editorialized on such unions. Using humor, White acknowledged the importance of weddings to the town, not only as shared events but also to the bottom line of local storekeepers: "Every time we hear of an elopement," he wrote, "we wonder that the dry goods merchants don't petition the legislature to make marriages by elopement illegal. Some dry goods merchant loses a big dry goods bill every time there is an elopement." What White neglected to mention, of course, was that the *Gazette* too missed out on sales when they could not report on a local wedding and the comings and goings of the wedding party and guests.<sup>9</sup>

When the *Gazette* published its own report on a wedding of a local merchant family it was much more elaborate than the *Kansas City Times's* report of the Rosenfeldt-Cohn wedding. On July 6, 1899, the *Gazette* reported the wedding of Heustis Warren, of the Warren Mortgage Company in Emporia, to Margaret Gould in Kansas City. The paper described in detail the decorations at the bride's sister's home, where the wedding, reception, and dance were held, and it elaborated at length on the bride's wedding dress and travel clothing as well as her flowers. "The wedding presents were many and costly,"

8. *Emporia Gazette*, December 15, 1899.

9. *Emporia Gazette*, August 27, 1898.



reported the correspondent, but only one was mentioned specifically: the bride's "only ornament was a sunburst of diamonds, a gift of the groom." The couple left for a visit to New York, and soon after a nearly three-month European honeymoon in England, Germany, France, and Switzerland.<sup>10</sup>

Sally Griffith, who has probably read the *Gazette* more closely and analytically than any other observer, has noted that "weddings, of course, were a staple [of the paper] and frequently appeared on the front page." The *Gazette's* treatment of weddings—in length and style, and in covering the travel that led up to and occurred after the events—was similar to other small-town midwestern papers. The celebrations received elaborate and detailed coverage, with attention to decorations, clothing, music, and food. "The length of the articles," Griffith concluded, "tended to be proportionate to the parties' social standing, but every ceremony that was more than a few words before the justice of the peace received at least several paragraphs."<sup>11</sup>

The coverage of weddings in the *Emporia Gazette* as well as in the local newspapers during White's Lawrence years and throughout the late nineteenth century suggest modifying Griffith's conclusion. It appears that newspaper coverage of weddings was in proportion not only to the social status of the celebrants' families but also to their economic standing. Both the *Gazette* and the Lawrence newspapers gave their lengthiest coverage to weddings of the local social elite and to those involving local merchants' families. Indeed the wedding reports in the *Gazette* after White purchased it and in the local Lawrence newspapers of the late nineteenth century suggest that the coverage of families of dry goods merchants equaled that of the local social elite. Main-street dry goods merchants, a good number of whom in small, midwestern towns were Jewish, collectively advertised the most in local newspapers. It was their economic status, especially as advertising patrons of the local newspapers, rather than their social status that explained the extensive newspaper coverage of their families' weddings.<sup>12</sup>

10. *Emporia Weekly Gazette*, July 6, 1899.

11. Griffiths, *Hometown News*, 164–65.

12. On Jewish presence in the clothing trades at every level see Rowena Olegario, "That Mysterious People': Jewish Merchants, Transparency, and Continuity in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Business History Review* 73 (Summer 1999): 165–66; and Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 98–101. One measure of Jewish merchants' absence from the highest level of local social life is found in the credit reports, admittedly heavily biased and anti-Semitic, of R. G. Dun &

Thus the *Gazette's* coverage of the Rosenfeldt-Cohn wedding in the late 1890s was matched in length only by the Taylor-Newman and Warren-Gould weddings. That is best explained by Rosenfeldt's status as a partner in the Star Clothing Company. Resident but a year in Emporia, he had not had time to establish a reputation in town that would merit standing among the town's leaders or its elite. What seemed to distinguish him was his partnership in a dry goods store, one that was among the *Gazette's* regular advertisers.

The importance of such advertisers to local newspapers was underscored in White's coverage of the 1887 Lawrence wedding as well. The only name of the wedding party White recalls in his *Autobiography* is that of the bride's family. Yet elsewhere in White's *Autobiography* it is clear that he had a gift for remembering people; he is remarkable at times in his ability to recall acquaintances' names. The House wedding seems to confirm his recall as well as being the exception that proves the rule. While remembering that the bride was from the House family, White did not record the names of the bride, Mary, or the groom, John Adler, or the first names of the House parents, Jacob and Frederica. It is possible that the House name came readily to his mind because House and the Steinberg brothers owned the two major men's clothing stores in late nineteenth-century Lawrence and were regular advertisers in the paper.

In a three-and-a-half-year period in the late 1880s Lawrence hosted and the newspapers featured four elaborate Jewish weddings, including the House wedding. The *Lawrence Daily Journal* provided extensive and detailed coverage, including lists of all the wedding presents given at each wedding. The first wedding, held in January 1896, united May Deichmann of Lawrence and A. M. Goldstandt of Wichita. May's father was a Lawrence butcher and regional stock dealer with probably the most extensive real estate holdings in town. Goldstandt was a partner with May's brother Alfred in a Wichita "gent's furnishing" store, and owned another

Co. (predecessor of Dun & Bradstreet). Relying on local informants—bankers, lawyers, and businessmen, including non-Jewish rivals of many Jewish-owned firms—the subjective reputational reports reveal that at least in professional and business circles, many Jewish merchants were held in low repute. This sharply contrasts with the relatively good reputation of local Jewish merchants as reflected in local midwestern press coverage. For a pioneering discussion of the Dun reports, housed at Baker Library of the Harvard Business School, see David G. Gerber, "Cutting out Shylock: Elite Anti-Semitism and the Quest for Moral Order in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Marketplace," *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982): 615–37, reprinted in Gerber, ed., *Anti-Semitism in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 201–32. For a more recent, critical study, see Olegario, "That Mysterious People," 161–89.

store in Colorado. In September 1886, Carrie Steinberg, daughter and niece of prominent Lawrence merchants (and rivals of Mary House's father, Jacob), wed Ben Barnett a merchant of Jerseyville, Illinois, scion of a prominent St. Louis merchant family. In February 1887, Carrie's close friend, Mary House, married John M. Adler of New York City. Adler's family ran well-known shoe stores in New York; his uncle was the manufacturer of Adler shoes. At the fourth wedding, in September 1889, Rachel Cohn, daughter of a Lawrence clothing dealer, married local merchant David Passon. The *Lawrence Daily Journal* gave the Goldstandt-Deichmann wedding a sub headline: "The first Public Wedding Ceremony ever Performed by a Hebrew Rabbi in the City." Rabbi Jacob Krauskopf, from Temple B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, performed the ceremony, and he returned to Lawrence for the Steinberg-Barnett and House-Adler weddings. By the time of the Cohn-Passon wedding, Krauskopf had moved on to a major pulpit in Philadelphia; his replacement at B'nai Jehudah, his brother-in-law Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, came to Lawrence to preside over the Cohn-Passon ceremony.<sup>13</sup>

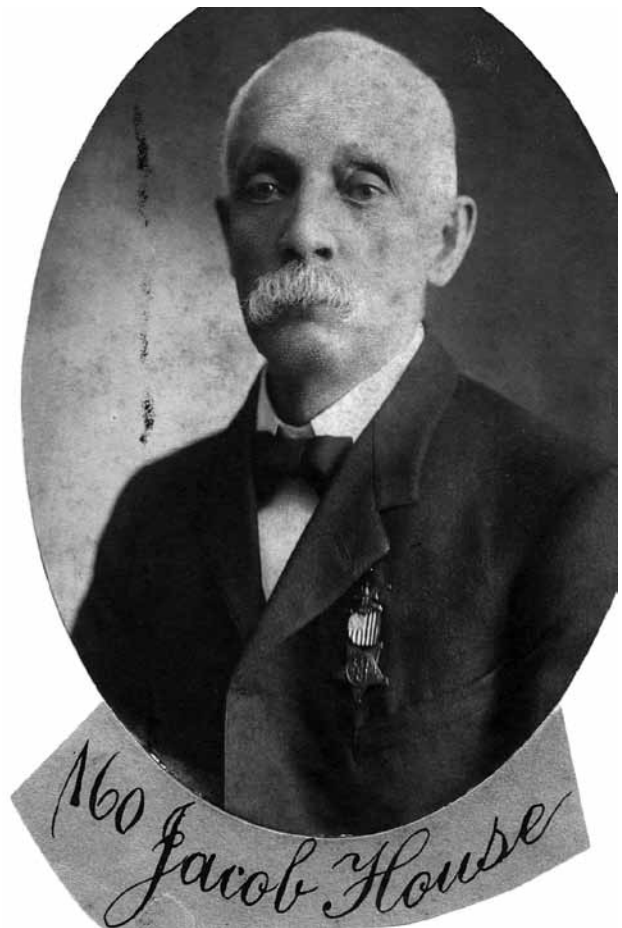
In style, tone, detail, and length, the *Lawrence Daily Journal's* report typified coverage of merchant families' weddings in late nineteenth-century small-town newspapers in the Midwest. Here is the *Journal's* report of the House wedding that White attended and discussed in his *Autobiography*:

#### AN ELEGANT WEDDING

Marriage of Miss Mary House and J. M. Adler of New York

Last evening the nuptial rites which shall bind in holy wedlock, Miss Mary House, daughter of our honored townsman, Jacob House, and Mr. J. M. Adler, of New York city, were celebrated in grand style at Mr. House's beautiful home on Ohio Street. The large mansion was handsomely decorated, and the spacious elegantly furnished rooms presented a brilliant appearance. The parlor where the ceremony took place was decorated with the rarest and choicest of flowers. From the ceiling was suspended a floral bell, made up of green fern, in which hyacinths[,] carnations, smilax, and the most royal of flowers, calla lilies, were

13. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, January 28 and September 16, 1886; February 17, 1887; September 5, 1889.



The *Lawrence Daily Journal*, in its account of the House wedding, referred to Jacob House as "our honored townsman." The success of House's clothing store and the size of his elegant home, for a time the largest in Lawrence, certainly did not argue against it. House, a native of Leipnik, Austria, had been in Lawrence only a year when Quantrill's raiders sacked the city in 1863. Although he was briefly taken prisoner, he and his business survived, and he spent the next fifty years clothing Lawrencians until his death at eighty in 1913. House also served for a time as a director of the Watkins National Bank and as a city councilman. GAR photograph of Jacob House courtesy of the Watkins Museum, Lawrence, Kansas.

artistically entwined. The bell was designed and constructed by Mrs. Paul R. Brooks and was a veritable work of art.

At 6:30 Buch's orchestra, which was seated behind a bank of flowers, struck up the thrilling strains of the wedding march, and the bridal party entered. Messrs. Abe Levy and Morris House acting as ushers. Under the wedding bell the contracting parties took their stand, and the grand impressive ceremony was gone through with, conducted by Rev. Dr. Krauskopf. The solemn words were spoken,

Miss House and Mr. Adler became Mr. and Mrs. Adler, husband and wife.

The ceremony was followed by a reception, to allow the guests present, about one hundred in number, to congratulate and extend their best wishes to the happy couple. Then a most sumptuous banquet was served by the Grosscup brothers, who fairly outdid their unexcelled reputation as the best of caterers. When dessert was served about sixty congratulatory telegrams were read and several toasts were responded to. Then dancing and social enjoyment continued for several hours.

Mr. and Mrs. Adler left on the mid-night train for Topeka. To-day they leave for their home in New York city.

The bride is one of the most beautiful and cultured of Lawrence's daughters, a worthy prize for the gentleman who wins her, Mr. Adler, a stranger here, but a man of means, ability, and character. May they have a long and prosperous life together.

The ceremonies were under the charge of Mr. S. Steinberg, whose experience and ability saw that every arrangement was perfect, and to whom much of the success of the evening is due.

The bride's dress was white duchesse satin, elaborately trimmed in real white lace, beaded in pearls; skirt covered with lace, waist to match same; corsage V shaped; veil and skirt festooned with orange blossoms; diamonds.

The groom and ushers wore the conventional black full dress. Among the ladies toilets were: Miss Rachel House, white satin petticoat covered with skirts of white moire striped tulle; white moire silk corsage, cut round neck and sleeveless; long suede gloves; garniture of forget-me-nots and rosettes of ribbon.

Misses Clara and Hattie House, sisters of bride, white moire silk and lace; garniture fresh flowers.

Mrs. J. House, black faille Francais, trimmed in cut jet, diamonds.

Miss Sarah Adler, of N.Y., sister of groom, white surah silk, Duchesse lace, and fresh flowers.

Mrs. M. Adler, of New York, black silk, cut jet, and diamonds.

Mrs. M. Sommer, of N.Y., black velvet and lace, diamonds.

Mrs. A. L. House, black silk, jet and diamonds.

Mrs. A. Katzenstein, of Lincoln, Neb., black silk and brocaded velvet, diamonds.

Mrs. R. Katzenstein, black silk and lace.

Mrs. W. Bergman, black silk and jet.

Mrs. Ben Barnett, white silk, brocade diamonds.

Miss Fannie Heyman, of St. Louis, black silk and jet, diamonds.

Miss Bertha Jacobs, blue silk and brocade.

Miss Carrie Levy, lavender cashmere and lace.

Miss Carrie Marks, blue silk, cut passementere, diamonds.

Miss Mattie Erb, of Little Rock, white silk, braided netting, diamonds.

Mrs. R. Levy, black silk.

Miss Celia Levy, of Topeka, white silk, white braided ornaments.

Mrs. J. Levy, of Topeka, black silk, lace and diamonds.

Mrs. S. Ettinger, of Topeka, black silk, jet, diamonds.

Mrs. H. Hull, of Topeka, black silk and jet, diamonds.

Mrs. Theo. Poehler, black silk and jet.

Mrs. A. Poehler, black silk and jet.

Mrs. S. Marks, black silk and jet, diamonds.

Mrs. A. Marks, black silk and diamonds.

Mrs. Bartledes, blue silk and black lace.

Mrs. Deichman [*sic*], black silk and jet.

Miss Minnie Walter, blue silk and flowers.

Mrs. Walters, black silk and jet.

Mrs. Albach, brown silk and velvet.

Mrs. Newmark, brown silk and velvet.

Mrs. E. Owens, black satin.

Mrs. Wise, black silk.

Mrs. M. Summerfield, black silk, jet, diamonds.

Mrs. Jacobs, black silk and jet, diamonds.

Mrs. Summerfield, black silk and lace.

Mrs. Mosler, green silk and velvet.

Mrs. E. J. Gilman, green cloth and plush.

The following were among the presents received: Check, from father and mother of bride; check, sisters and brothers of bride; four oil paintings, Miss Rachel House; solid

silver set, Mr. and Mrs. J. Levy, of N.Y.; French china hand-painted tea set, A. and L. Levy of N.Y.; solid silver tea set, Julius Stitch, of N.Y.; solid silver tea set, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. House; entire set Britannica encyclopedia, Mrs. Katzenstein; solid silver tea spoons, Mr. and Mrs. Katzenstein, of Lincoln, Neb.; silver tea spoons, Morris House; dozen teaspoons, Mr. and Mrs. Shoenbroen, of Chicago; oxidized silver set, Samuel J. Wise, of Topeka; berry dish, Mr. Bing, of Parsons; French china water set, Harry Marx, of St. Louis; tray and water set, Mr. and Mrs. Theo. Poehler; crayon drawing, Arthur and Jacob Steinberg; embroidered slumber roll, Julius and Hattie Liepman, of Fort Scott; imported candle holder, Theo. Poehler, Jr.; statuary, Mr. and Mrs. S. Steinberg; brass table, Leo Steinberg; Smyrna rug, Mr. and Mrs. M. Newmark; steel engraving, Mrs. Levy and family; silver knives and forks, Mr. and Mrs. A. Cohn; silver knives, Al Deichman [*sic*]; silver cake stand, Mr. and Mrs. Ettinger; carving set, A. Marks and family; cake knife, Mr. and Mrs. R. Sommer; bisque plaque [*sic*], Mr. and Mrs. Gehorsam; card receiver, Bertha Jacobs; pearl handled knives, Samuel Isaacs, of N.Y.; bronze statuary, Felix Rothschild; silver fruit holder, A. Poehler; bisque ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. Barteldes; vase and ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. J. Levy, of Topeka; Geo. Eliot's works, M. and Celia Levy; toilet set, Dora Simon; cake knives, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hull, of Topeka; Mr. and Mrs. F. Deichman [*sic*]; bisque figure, L. Myers; bisque ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Hofman; oxidized silver soup ladle, Mr. and Mrs. Sommer; fruit knife, Mr. and Mrs. Summeffield; berry spoons, Mrs. Summerfield; hand-painted butter dishes, D. Hollo; silver ladle, Mr. and Mrs. Mosler; ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Barnett and Fannie Heyman; silver pepper boxes, Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Skofstan; napkin rings, Mr. and Mrs. Bergman; silver toothpicks, Mr. and Mrs. Goldstandt; pickle dish, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Marks; water set, Mr. and Mrs. A. Owens; fruit dish, Mr. and Mrs. Albach; decanters and wine glasses, Mrs. F. Wise; bisque ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. S. Hofman.<sup>14</sup>

A good part of the Lawrence Jewish merchant community turned out for the wedding, as well as some merchants from Topeka, where Jacob House was partner with his brother in a clothing store. The guests included a few non-Jewish Massachusetts Street merchants: the Poehlers, Albachs, and Barteldes, for example. At the same time not all of Lawrence's Jewish merchant families attended the wedding; members of neither the J. H. Cohn nor Urbansky families, for example, were listed in the paper's account. Among the Jewish attendees there was a cluster of four local families: the Houses, of both Lawrence and Topeka, whose kin included the Levys, Sommers, Bergmans, and Katzensteins; the Steinberg clan, which included the Steinbergs, Markses, Marxes, Wises, and Barnetts; the Summerfields, including their relatives the Jacobses, Moslers, and Erbs; and the Deichmans, including the Goldstandts and Heymans.

The newspaper's detailed description of the event, the dresses and jewelry worn by those in attendance, and the gifts made to the couple give a hint of the relative affluence of Lawrence's merchant Jewish community. But it was their economic position, not their social status, that gave them whatever prominence they had in town. Though a few of the men belonged to the Turn Verein, Masons, and Odd Fellows, and some held local political office (Jacob House, for example, served as a councilman), they were not part of the city's social elite, none of whom were at the wedding. Any listing of the local economic elite would start with the families of J. B. Watkins, whose mortgage companies in America and Europe and extensive real estate and banking holdings were among the largest in the United States, and J. D. Bowersock, Lawrence mayor, U.S. congressman, owner of the local dam and milling company, banker, and leading socialite. These businessmen, along with the town's other manufacturers, bankers, lawyers, and doctors, joined the university faculty, ministers, and some "old settlers" to comprise much of town's social elite. Lawrence's Jewish merchants were important in the town's retail life, but were not much represented in its manufacturing or energy sectors. Instead they formed the backbone of the Massachusetts Street merchant class, and were part of Lawrence's slowly increasing middle class. The one exception in the Jewish community was among the Summerfields. Marcus Summerfield, whose parents and brother-in-law ran a local bakery and grocery,

14. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, February 17, 1887. A brief mention of the wedding appeared in the *American Israelite*, the most widely published Jewish newspaper of the time, which had its greatest circulation

in the Midwest. Rabbi Krauskopf probably sent the notice to the *Israelite*, edited by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. Krauskopf had been in the first graduating class of Wise's seminary, Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. *American Israelite*, February 25, 1887.

## OF SUFFRAGE.

Registers. In the  
Village Hill Constitu-  
tional!

ry memorable one in  
age in this city. The  
red in Lawrence, had  
in the registration list,  
vicious fact evidence of  
the freeman's right to

Diggs quietly walked  
office and both reciev-  
ed a few weeks, but  
the results will

The right of man-  
has been given to  
were, is now to be ex-  
sidered by many  
it is looked forward

Diggs' registration, a  
old in the city clerk's  
house local statesmen,  
ohn Gardner, Captain  
s and Jack Watts. It  
verdict of these dis-  
tlemen that the act  
suffrage to women is  
opinion slightly at  
the legislators, some  
a questioned it, not  
s opponent, Ed Car-  
ferred that municipal  
ill settle the liquor  
ing to arouse pub-

## AN ELEGANT WEDDING.

Marriage of Miss Mary House and J.  
M. Adler of New York.

Last evening the nuptial rites which shall  
bind in holy wedlock, Miss Mary House,  
daughter of our honored townsman, Jacob  
House, and Mr. J. M. Adler, of New York  
city, were celebrated in grand style at Mr.  
House's beautiful home on Ohio street.

The large mansion was handsomely dec-  
orated, and the spacious elegantly furnished  
rooms presented a brilliant appearance.  
The parlor where the ceremony took place  
was decorated with the rarest and choicest  
of flowers. From the ceiling was sus-  
pended a floral bell, made up  
of green fern, in which hycanthus  
carnations, smilax, and the most royal of  
flowers, calla lilies, were artistically entwined.

The bell was designed and constructed  
by Mrs. Paul R. Brooks and was a veritable  
work of art.  
At 6:30 Buch's orchestra, which was  
seated behind a bank of flowers, struck up  
the thrilling strains of the wedding march,  
and the bridal party entered, Messrs. Abe  
Levy and Morris House acting as ushers.  
Under the wedding bell the contracting  
parties took their stand, and the grand im-  
pressive ceremony was gone through with,  
conducted by Rev. Dr. Krauskopf. The  
solemn words were spoken. Miss House  
and Mr. Adler became Mr. and Mrs. Adler,  
husband and wife.

The ceremony was followed by a recep-  
tion, to allow the guests present, about one

J. Levy, of Topeka; Geo. Elliot's  
Works, M. and Celia Levy, toilet set, Dora  
Simon; cake knives, Mr. and Mrs. Henry  
Hull, of Topeka; Mr. and Mrs. F. Delch-  
man; bisque figure, L. Myers; bisque orna-  
ments, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Hofman; oxidized  
silver soup ladles, Mr. and Mrs. M. Som-  
mers; fruit knife, Mr. and Mrs. Summerfield;  
berry spoon, Mrs. Summerfield; hand-  
painted butter dishes, D. Hall; silver table,  
Mr. and Mrs. Mosier; ornaments, Mr. and  
Mrs. Ben Barnett and Fannie Heyman;  
silver pepper boxes, Mr. and Mrs. M. J.  
Skoteman; napkin rings, Mr. and Mrs. Berg-  
man; pickle dish, Mr. and Mrs. Sol. Mark;  
water set, Mr. and Mrs. A. Owens; fruit  
dish, Mr. and Mrs. P. Albeck; decanters  
and wine glasses, Mrs. F. Wise; bisque  
ornaments, Mr. and Mrs. S. Hofman.

## Never Mind the Weather.

We found yesterday that peo-  
ple never mind the weather when  
they realize that they can get  
genuine bargains, even though a  
journey through a sea of mud is  
necessary to reach them. We  
had a rushing business all day  
yesterday. The reason is that  
the man who has and does exact-  
ly as he advertises, gets the trade.  
GEO. INNES.

## PERSONAL.

Miss Laura Roberts is visiting in Olathe.

## Right to the Front of All Competition

—WE PLACE OUR—

## NEW WINTER STYLES,

Complete in Assortment.

Overflowing with Generous Bargains,

Splendid in Quality,

—IN—

## MENS' AND BOY'S CLOTHING!

—AND—

## Gent's Furnishing Goods

At Prices that MUST Surely Lead to Speedy Sale.

Come and Get the Benefit of Our Unbroken Stock.

The Brightest, Newest, and Best Fall and Winter Styles.

Lowest Prices consistent with Good Quality and Honest Quantity.

DON'T MISS THE PLACE.

## Jacob House, the Popular Clothier

731 MASSACHUSETTS STREET.

An advertisement for Jacob House's clothiers in the February 17, 1887, edition of the Lawrence Daily Journal ran alongside a write-up of his daughter's wedding, which took place the previous evening. Local newspapers paid particular attention to the special events in the lives of their best advertisers, sometimes elevating the comings and goings of a town's merchant class to the same status as those of the social elite.

was both a physician and attorney and the first Jewish professor at the university. At the same time his brother Elias was beginning his career as a railroad executive and philanthropist.<sup>15</sup>

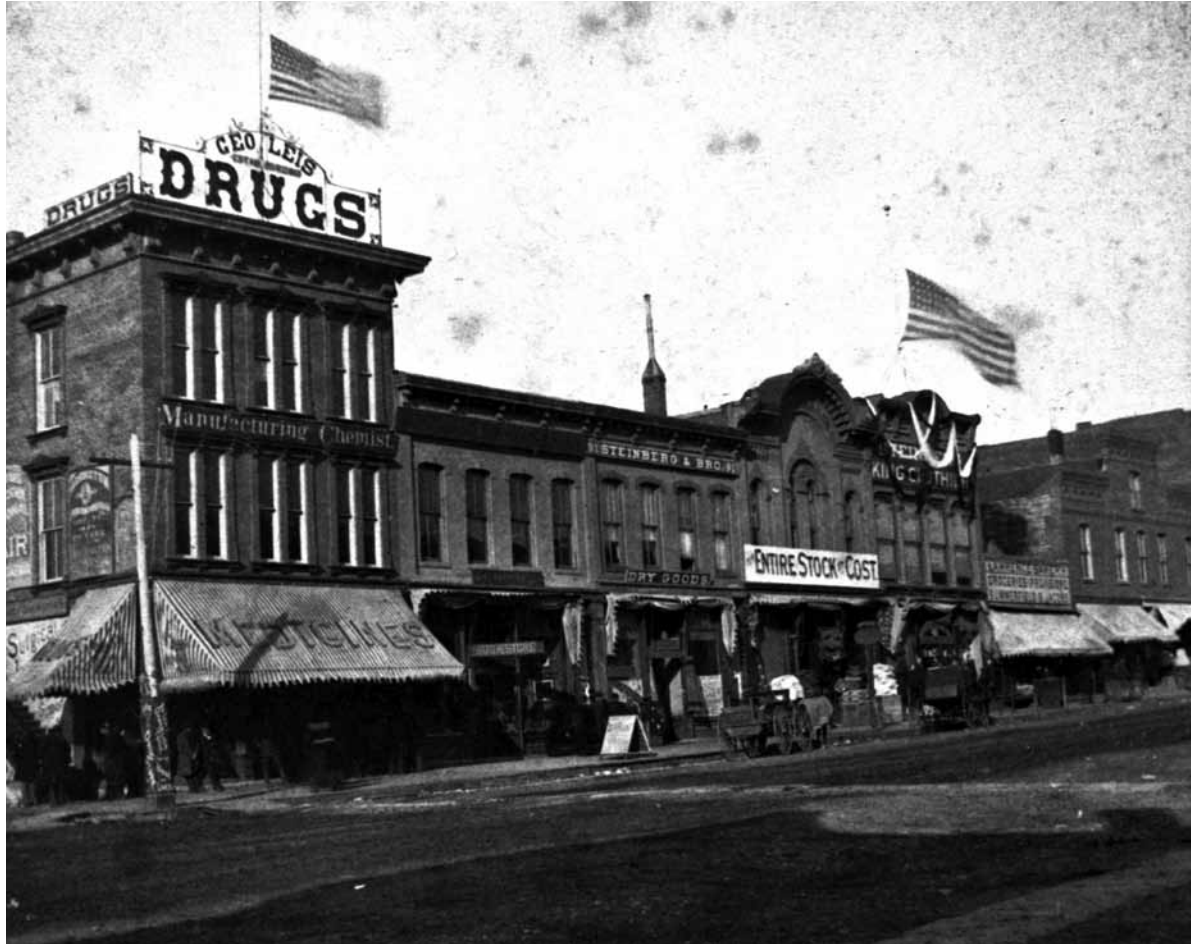
William Allen White's recollection of the 1887 House wedding in Lawrence and his initial failure to reform newspaper coverage of weddings provide perspective on small town life around the turn of the nineteenth century, specifically on the role of the press and the presence of Jewish merchants in the Midwest. To read the pages of newspapers from these towns with small Jewish merchant communities, such as Lawrence and Emporia, offers the impression that the Jewish merchants were among the most prominent of townspeople. More than any other single local group, dry goods merchants financially supported the local press through regular display advertising in the town

papers, and often Jews formed a majority among local dry goods retailers. The town newspapers reciprocated on a daily basis, reporting the activities and life cycle events of these merchants and their families. The local press also gave favorable coverage to Jewish issues and communities around the world. Thus in late nineteenth-century Lawrence, the activities of the dozen or so Jewish merchant families comprised a significant part of local news items. Disproportionately represented among dry goods merchants, they were accordingly overrepresented in the daily newspapers.<sup>16</sup>

The irony is that in nineteenth-century moderately sized towns with small Jewish communities, Jewish merchants are nearly absent from all other surviving historical records. They left their mark in the daily newspapers and in local cemeteries, but rarely beyond that. Lawrence's nineteenth-century Jewish families and community tend to be absent from the town histories (with two exceptions), the local historical collections,

15. For information on House see his biography, "Jacob House, Lawrence," in *The United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume* (Chicago, Ill.: S. Lewis & Co., 1879), 173-74; his obituary, "Jacob House, A Pioneer Is Dead," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, August 25, 1913; and a tribute to him, "A Long Time With Us," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, August 26, 1913. For Frederica House, see "Death of Mrs. House," *Lawrence Daily Journal*, June 29, 1904. On Watkins as a national figure, see Allan G. Bogue, *Money at Interest: The Farm Mortgage on the Middle Border* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955).

16. Ewa Morawska, in her study of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, noted that while the local German-Jewish merchants were not part of the town's "socio-economic structure," the local *Johnstown Tribune* in the 1870s and 1880s "not infrequently carried information, presented in a positive light, about 'Jewish' events around the world and different aspects of Jewish history." This was because, she suggested, most of the Jews in Johnstown "were prosperous merchants who regularly advertised" in the paper. Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 192, 340n14.



A photograph of downtown Lawrence from the early 1890s shows a handful of Jewish businesses along Massachusetts Street. Looking north from Eighth and Massachusetts, the Jewish-owned Steinberg dry goods and clothing store is in the center, identified by the signs “Steinberg & Bros.,” “Entire Stock at Cost,” and “Steinberg King Clothier,” the other major men’s clothing retailer in Lawrence along with Jacob House’s shop. Further to the right a sign touts “Lawrence Bakers, Groceries, and Provisions, Summerfield & Jacobs,” on a shop run by another of the town’s Jewish merchant families, some members of which attended the House wedding. Down the block, just outside the frame of this photo, stood Jacob House’s clothing store at 729–731 Massachusetts Street.

and in the commemorations of the town’s centennial and sesquicentennial.<sup>17</sup>

Thus William Allen White’s recall of the House wedding in his *Autobiography* and his moment of youthful indiscretion—his getting drunk at a wedding while on assignment for the newspaper—provide a glimpse of nineteenth-century Jewish life and the main-street German-Jewish merchant communities in the Midwest.

17. The two exceptions are the pioneering study of local merchants by Katja Rampelmann, “Small Town Germans: The Germans of Lawrence, Kansas, from 1854 to 1918” (master’s thesis, University of Kansas, 1993); and a remarkable work of local research: Carol Buhler Francis, *The House Building: My Search for Its Foundations* (Lawrence: Transomworks Press, 1990). A journalist and owner of the building where House & Co. had plied its trade on Massachusetts Street, Francis has researched and told the story of the House building, and found and interviewed descendants of Jacob and Frederica House.

It also offers some perspective on how newspapers in the Midwest struggled to balance their roles as recorders of daily life and as businesses interested in making a profit. “The small-town newspaper in the nineteenth century followed few of the norms of today’s ostensibly objective journalism,” Sally Griffith has noted. “Its purpose was less to mirror reality than to create a vision of the community that embodied the economic and political goals of its proprietors and backers.” That role led the nineteenth-century local press to give elaborate coverage to an otherwise historically invisible and forgotten group: main street dry goods merchants, many of whom were Jewish.<sup>18</sup> [KH]

18. Griffith, *Home Town News*, 13–14.