

SCRAP YARD

INNOVATORS OF RECYCLING

EARNING A LIVING IN A NEW HOME ARCHIVAL EXPLORATION

RESOURCE PACKET

Throughout history, immigrants came to America for a wide variety of reasons. One of these reasons was to seek economic prosperity in the land where “the streets were paved in gold,” but for many immigrants the only opportunities were in difficult jobs demanding in both their time and labor. Learn about five different industries in which new immigrants historically found employment through this primary source driven archival exploration.

1. Divide your class into five small groups and give each group one of the photographs and a corresponding questions sheet. **Do not tell your students which industry their photograph portrays.** Then ask students to analyze the photograph and complete their corresponding questions sheet.
2. Then give each group their corresponding “About Photograph #” worksheet and have the students read the provided secondary source material and answer the questions on the worksheet.
3. Ask students to write a diary entry as though they were an immigrant in the United States working in their industry during the 1920s. Students should address what their job entails, the workplace conditions, the benefits and challenges, why they found work in this industry, and what skills and values they need.
4. Ask students to share their diary entries with the class.



JewishMuseumMd.org



[@jewishmuseummd @jmm_md](https://facebook.com/jewishmuseummd)

Photo #1



JMM 1994.021.013

Questions for Photo #1

1. When do you think this photograph was taken?

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Who is in the photograph? What can we learn about these people based upon their clothing, facial expressions, etc.?

4. What are the people in the photograph doing?

5. What do you think the people in the photograph did for a living?

6. What skills do you think these people needed for their jobs?

About Photograph #1

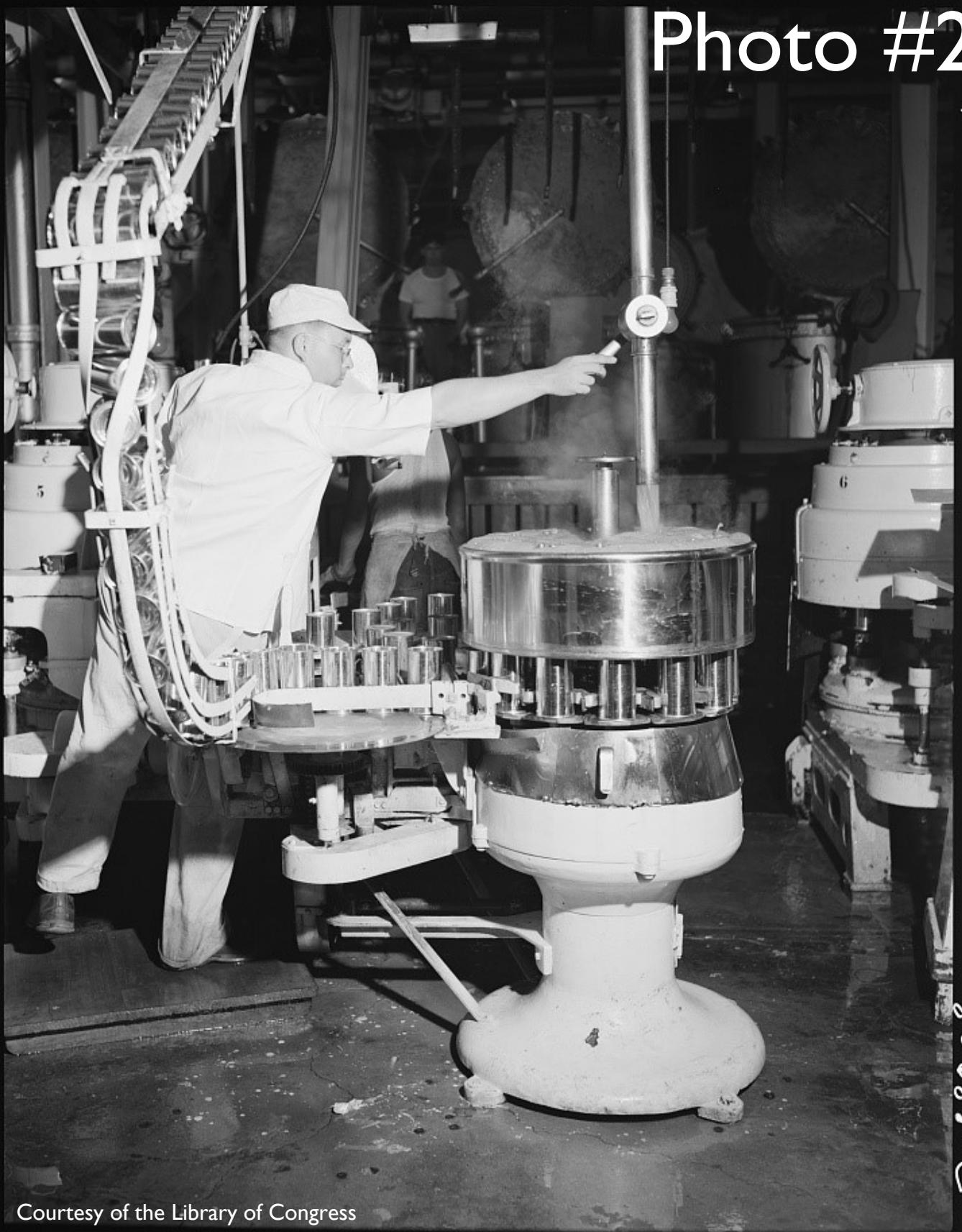
This picture illustrates women working at sewing machines as part of the **garment industry**, or the clothing making industry. These women were part of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and represented this organization's Cloak Maker's Union of Baltimore. The ILGWU was founded in 1900 to help garner better working conditions for women working in the garment industry, and its original membership was comprised largely of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Please read this article about Jewish immigrants in the New York City **garment industry** and answer the questions below: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-garment-workers/>

1. What were the three types of job sites in the 20th century garment industry?
2. What were the newest immigrants to the United States often called?
3. Describe the conditions in an average sweatshop.
4. What two advantages did working in a sweatshop give Jewish immigrants?
5. Why do you think that immigrants historically worked in the garment industry after arriving in the United States?



Photo #2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8c33081

Questions for Photo #2

1. When do you think this photograph was taken?

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Who is the person in the photograph? What can we learn about him based upon his clothing, facial expressions, etc.?

4. What is the individual in the photograph doing?

5. What do you think this person did for a living?

6. What skills do you think he needed for his job?

About Photograph #2

This picture from 1941 depicts a man filling cans with tomato juice as part of the **food packaging industry**, sometimes known as the canning industry. This individual worked at the Phillips Packing Company in Cambridge, MD which supplied many of the pre-made meals for soldiers during both World Wars.

Read this article from the *Baltimore Sun* exploring the history of the **food packaging industry** in Baltimore during the 20th century and then answer the questions below:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/retro-baltimore/bs-md-ci-retro-tomatoes-20180720-story.html>

1. Name three canning factories that used to operate in Baltimore city.

2. What foods were often canned in Maryland?

3. Where in Baltimore were the majority of canning factories located?

4. Which groups of people often lived and worked in these neighborhoods?

5. Why do you think that immigrants historically worked in the food packaging industry after arriving in the United States?

Photo #3



Questions for Photo #3

1. When do you think this photograph was taken?

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Who is in the photograph? What can we learn about this individual based upon his clothing, facial expression, etc.?

4. What is the person in the photograph doing?

5. Why do you think this individual is holding a bag over his shoulder? What do you think the bag is for?

6. What do you think this person's job was at the time of this photograph?

About Photograph #3

This image from the 19th century depicts a rag peddler in New York who worked in the **scrap industry**. Rag Peddlers would collect old clothing which they would then sell for profit to fabric or paper mills. These mills would use the collected materials to make new fabric or paper that could be resold. While the scrap industry includes the collection of metals, plastics, and rubber, selling rags was the largest part of the scrap industry until the early 20th century.

Learn more about the **scrap industry** and the immigrant families who shaped it by reading the introduction and section titled “A Hidden Opportunity” from this article in *Recycling Today*: <https://www.recyclingtoday.com/article/rt50-metal-world-scrap-industry/> Then answer the questions below:

1. According to the introduction, what does the scrap industry do with metals?
2. How does the scrap industry's work help save the environment?
3. With the improvement of the economy in the 1920s, how did those in the scrap industry grow their businesses?
4. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, why did the scrap industry ask Americans to “part with pots and pans?”
5. Why do you think that immigrants historically worked in the scrap industry after arriving in the United States?

Photo #4



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016820431>

Questions for Photo #4

1. When do you think this photograph was taken?

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Who is in the photograph? What can we learn about these people based upon their clothing, facial expressions, etc.?

4. What are the people in the photograph doing?

5. What do you think their job was at the time of this photograph?

6. What skills do you think they needed for their jobs?

About Photograph #4

This image, likely from the early 20th century, depicts two individuals ironing clothing at Tolman Laundry, historically in Washington, D.C. The **laundry and linen industry**, in which people washed, dried, and repaired clothing, was one in which immigrants often found employment. They would either work in a large factory or in the homes of various families.

Learn more about Jewish immigrants in the **laundry and linen industry** by reading this article from the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan (<https://www.michjewishhistory.org/gallery/2017/10/laundry-and-linen.html>) and then answer the questions below:

1. What percentage of “big steam laundries in Michigan” were owned by Jewish families?
2. What were the different tasks people performed in the laundry and linen industry?
3. How did Samuel P. Baker begin in the laundry and linen business? How many people worked for his company when it closed in 2013?
4. Name two ways that the laundry and linen business changed over time?
5. Why do you think that immigrants historically worked in the laundry and linens industry after arriving in the United States?

Photo #5



JMM 2002.081.001

Questions for Photo #5

1. When do you think this photograph was taken?

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Who is in the photograph? What can we learn about these people based upon their clothing, facial expressions, etc.?

4. What are the people in the photograph doing?

5. What do you think the people in the photograph did for a living?

6. What skills do you think these people needed for their jobs?



About Photograph #5

This image from 1932 depicts Joseph Weiner's first store in the **grocery industry**. Weiner's store, historically located on Homestead Street in Baltimore, was one of many "mom-and-pop" grocery stores owned by Jewish immigrants in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Learn more about the history of Jewish immigrants in the **grocery industry** by reading this essay from the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington's online exhibition *Half a Day on Sunday: Jewish-Owned Mom and Pop Grocery Stores* <https://www.jhsgw.org/exhibitions/online/momandpop/essay/> and answer the questions below:

1. About how many Jewish-owned mom-and-pop grocery stores were there in D.C., VA, and MD? In what kind of neighborhoods were they most often located?
2. What did Jewish immigrants working in the grocery industry often find hard to maintain?
3. What benefits did a mom-and-pop grocery store have in joining a grocery cooperative?
4. In what ways did the grocery industry begin to change in the 1930s?
5. Why do you think that immigrants historically worked in the grocery industry after arriving in the United States?



Earning a Living in a New Home: Answer Key

GARMENT INDUSTRY

1. The three job sites in the garment industry were: the family system, the factory, and the sweatshop.
2. New immigrants were often called “greenhorns.”
3. Conditions in the sweatshops were very poor; they were often over-crowded and hot.
4. In the sweatshops, often immigrants could communicate in their own language and maintain their religious practices.

CANNING INDUSTRY

1. Some of the canneries in Baltimore were: Gibbs, J. Langrall, Lord Mott, Roberts Brothers, H.J. McGrath, and P.E. Foote
2. Foods often canned in Maryland were tomatoes, lima beans, peas, strawberries, corn, string beans, spinach, and oysters.
3. Most of Baltimore’s canneries were in the Southeast part of the city, primarily near the Boston Street corridor.
4. Often Eastern European immigrants and African Americans worked in this industry.

SCRAP INDUSTRY

1. According to the article, the scrap metals industry “serve[s] to collect metals before they can be landfilled and then process[es] and ship[s] them anywhere in the world where metals producers can turn them into new products.”
2. The scrap industry repurposes metals, greatly reducing the amount mining and usage of non-renewable resources.
3. In the 1920s, many entrepreneurs in the scrap industry acquired land, hired employees, and purchased new scrap processing equipment.
4. The industry urged Americans to “part with their pots and pans” so that the metal could be repurposed to make battleships, airplanes, and ammunition for the war effort.

Earning a Living in a New Home: Answer Key

LAUNDRY AND LINEN INDUSTRY

1. In the 1880s, Jewish families owned ninety percent of the laundries in Michigan.
2. Different roles in the laundry and linen industry included: sorting the clothing, loading large washing machines, driving a truck to collect the laundry, and repairing clothing.
3. Samuel P. Baker's first job in the laundry and linen industry was "driving a horse-drawn buggy for a small laundry" business. When the Baker family closed the business after a fire in 2013, it had employed 95 people.
4. The laundry and linen business changed in a number of ways. First, many businesses rapidly grew from single family affairs to larger factories. Second, the industry diversified, with some factories focusing on specific articles of clothing. Third, there was an increase of safety regulations and employment laws, which caused many smaller laundries to sell their business to larger regional, or national chains.

GROCERY INDUSTRY

1. There were almost 400 mom-and-pop grocery stores owned by Jewish families in the D.C., MD, and VA area. The majority of these grocery stores were located in non-Jewish neighborhoods.
2. Many Jewish owners of grocery stores found it difficult "maintain the traditional Jewish lifestyle," which would include closing the store on Saturdays for the Sabbath and other major Jewish holidays.
3. Joining a grocery cooperative offered Jewish grocery store owners an opportunity to get cheaper prices from wholesale sellers and joint advertising. The grocery cooperatives often also challenged anti-Semitism in both the economic and social spheres.
4. Many changes came to the grocery industry in the 1930s. One major change was location. As customers moved to the suburbs, many of the grocery stores moved as well. Additionally, there was a sharp increase of regional grocery chains. In response, some of the mom-and-pop Jewish-owned grocery stores grew to meet demands; some moved onto other businesses, and some closed down entirely.