

SHALOM! SEFARAD

The Flourishing Life of Seattle's Sephardic Jews



WASHINGTON STATE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Turkish immigrants **Sam Bension Maimon** and **Jack Funes** opened **24th Avenue Market** in the heart of Seattle's "Judería" in 1934. Sam's brother, **Solomon** (far right), grew up to become the longtime rabbi of one of Seattle's two Sephardic synagogues.

THE HEBREW WORD "Shalom" has several definitions. Spoken most often as a greeting, the word also can mean *peace, security, integrity, ingenuity, prosperity and fulfillment*.

The Hebrew word **"Sefarad"** translates as *Spain*, where communities of Jews lived until the 15th century. In the early-20th century, Spanish Jews, known as *sefardíes*, began leaving their adopted homelands of **Turkey** and the Greek island of **Rhodes** in order to escape religious persecution, political turmoil or military conscription. Many of them resettled in the northwest corner of the United States to begin a new adventure in a young town called Seattle.

The Sephardic immigrants of Seattle started businesses to meet the commercial demands of a growing city and to serve the unique needs of the Jewish community. They sold a variety of goods, including fish, produce, meat, candies, pastries, flowers, jewelry and curtains. They operated grocery stores, print shops and shoe repair shops.

This exhibit features the triumphant stories of those immigrant families and the community they formed. Sephardic Jews continue to enhance the economic and cultural fabric of Seattle while endeavoring to embody the values behind the versatile word that greets you here today:

Shalom!

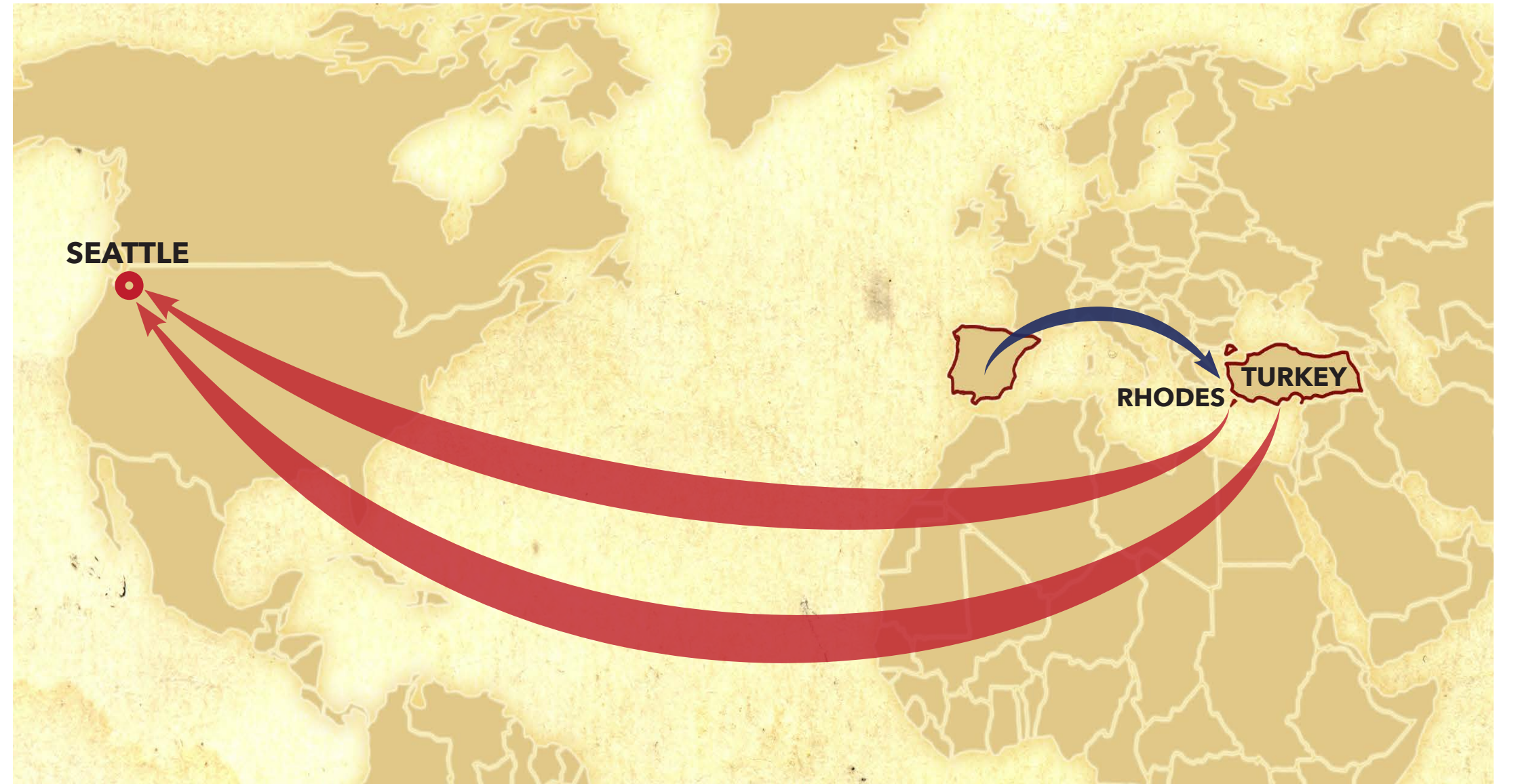


THE ROAD FROM SPAIN TO SEATTLE

From Spain ...

THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY originated about a thousand years ago in the Iberian Peninsula. Living under Catholic or Muslim rule, Jews energized Spanish society through their contributions in art, culture and commerce. They also produced world-renowned rabbinic scholarship.

This period of coexistence, or *convivencia*, gave way to religious intolerance, forced conversions and persecution by the Inquisition. In 1492, the Spanish monarchs ordered all Jews to convert, leave or face death. The expulsion resulted in a Sephardic diaspora across the Mediterranean and beyond. Many settled in the Ottoman Empire where they established their own communities that thrived for more than four centuries. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire during the early 20th century, however, propelled a new wave of Sephardic migration; many settled in Seattle.



Over the centuries, Sephardic Jews developed their own traditions, customs and language. **Ladino**, also known as *Judezmo* or Judeo-Spanish, is rooted in 16th century Castilian and other Iberian languages, and also incorporates elements from Hebrew, Arabic and languages spoken in their new lands of residence. Until the 20th century, it was written in the Hebrew alphabet.

In June 2015, the government of Spain offered citizenship to descendants of those Sephardic Jews expelled more than five centuries ago. The offer has sparked a renewed interest among Sephardic Jews in their past and sparked a discussion about Spain in the 21st century.



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Seattle had its own Ladino theatre group that performed for Sephardic audiences. (1920s)

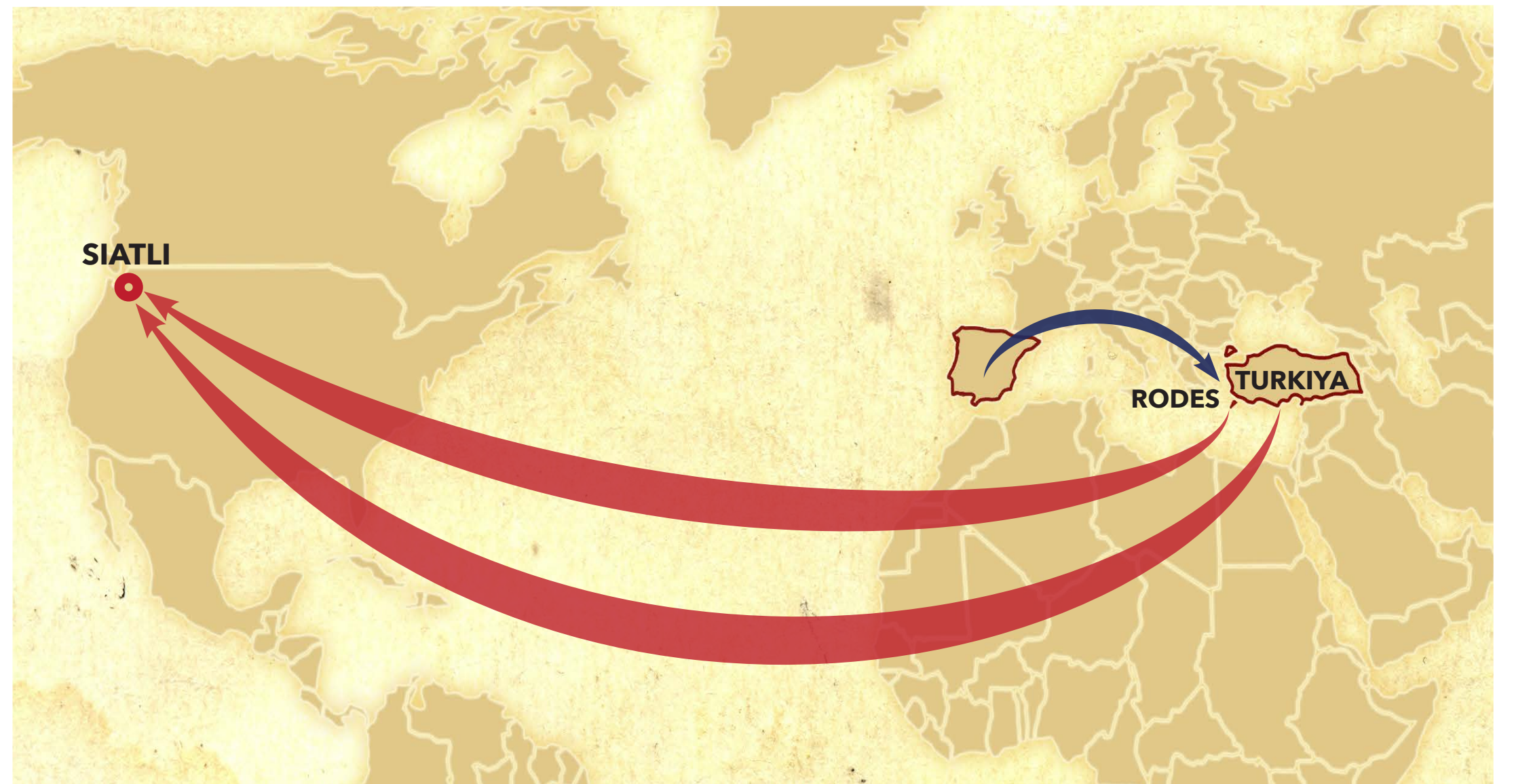
EL KAMINO DE SEFARAD A SIATLI

(Translated in modern Ladino. You can easily see the Spanish roots as well as the influence of other languages.)

De Sefarad ...

LA KOMUNITA SEFARADIT se estabelisio en Sefarad tras mil anyos. Basho el hok de los Kristianos o Muzalmanos, djudyos kolayladearon el dezvelopamiento de la socheta spanyola kon arte, kultura, i komercha. Eskrivieron tambien hohmat Yisrael.

Avagar avagar, la epoka de itahad i anasir deskayo, i dinsiz tomo el poder afriyindo a los anusim kon los autos-da-fe organizados por la inkuizion. En 1492, los reyes katolikos forsaron a los djudyos a konvertirsen, fuyirsen, o ser matados. Kon el gerush Sefarad se nasio una diaspora en el Mediteraneo i mas londje. Se establisieron en el imperio Otomano onde se fondaron nuevas keiloth ke enfloresieron por mas de kuatro siekolos. Zavali, la deskayensa del imperio Otomano al empesijo del siekolo 20 provoko nuevas migraciones de los sefaradim; muchos se instalaron en Siatli.



Tras las doroth, Sefaradim dezvelopo sus propios minhagim i lingua, **Ladino**. Konosido tambien komo Judezmo o djudeo-espanyol, Ladino se baza en el kasteyano del siekolo 15 i otras linguas iberikas i karishtereo kon biervos de ebreo, arabi, i las linguas de sus nuevos vezindados. Fista el siekolo 20, se eskrivia kon letras ebreas.

En djunyo 2015, el governo de Espanya ofresio sudetansa a los desendientes de los Sefaradim ekspulsados mas de sinko siekolos antes. Esta posabilita se renovo el interes entre los Sefaradim en sus pasado i avrio lakirdi sovre sus goral i Espanya en el siekolo 21.



COURTESY OF CYNTHIA FLASH HEMPHILL,
FROM THE BOOK: A HUG FROM AFAR

Nine-year-old Clara Barkey writes a letter in Ladino from her home in Rhodes to her Uncle Raphael (Ralph) Capeluto in Seattle. The Italian language influences the style of her writing because Rhodes was a colony of Italy at the time she was growing up.

Podi 24 Marzo 1930.

Carrissimo Zio Raphael Capeluto.

Con grande plaser li ago esta cica letra por averti saver como *grazias* al diò ià stamos mui buenos de la salut de mismo speramos sa-
ver de su parte amen esta semana *reservi*,
mos una cica letra suia i mos alegrimos
moi muncio tumimos rissivo de su letra che
mi alegrì mui muncio ammu che risiviera
~~particular para mi cherido Zio es che il tiempo~~
no mi prohete che cada semana le chero escre-
vir porchè l'estudio tinemus muncio aguera
porchè stamos axiendo lo che estavan axiendo
antis nellas classas altas. Cada Kernes tinemus
gimlastica l'otro Kernes mos foto-grafimos con
el misiv di gimlastica che es un Italiano
i si ama Paoselli. I merchè una stampica
che no costa nada, se chero conosermi es mui
che me disio il cherido Papa che meta un

THE ROAD FROM SPAIN TO SEATTLE

... to Seattle

SEATTLE'S SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY began to form in the early 20th century when two groups of Jews from the Mediterranean began immigrating to the United States. Ultimately, they found their way from the Statue of Liberty in New York to the tall timbers and salt waters of Pacific Northwest.



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Above: Sephardic girls in Seattle doing Israeli dance. (1955)

Below: Congregation Ezra Bessaroth Boys Choir. (1931)

One group originated from various towns in Turkey, including Tekirdag, Marmara and Gallipoli. Often referred to as “Turks,” this group founded the **Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation**. Around the same time, another came from the Greek island of Rhodes. Often referred to as “Rhodeslis,” this group founded **Congregation Ezra Bessaroth**.

With roots planted more than a century ago, the Turks and Rhodeslis remain central to Seattle’s Sephardic community, their distinctive identities preserved through the two synagogues that their ancestors founded. Turks and Rhodeslis are quick to point to their nuanced differences yet are united through a joyful spirit that defines Seattle’s Sephardic community.



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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UW1092

In 1902, **Solomon Calvo**, left, was one of the first two Sephardic Jews ever to step foot in Seattle. He operated **Waterfront Fish & Oyster**, which supplied product to some of the earliest fishmongers at Pike Place Market. (1914)

SEPHARDIC JEWS AND PIKE PLACE MARKET

LIVING IN A STRANGE LAND and speaking an exotic language, Sephardic Jews could have found Seattle as just another stop along a prolonged exile that began with their expulsion from Spain in 1492. Having emigrated from Turkey and Rhodes in the Eastern Mediterranean, they found little in common with the Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe who had settled in Seattle before them.

Yet something about Seattle's salt-air ambience felt right, and no place seemed more comfortable than **Pike Place Market**. The public market opened in 1907—five years after the first Sephardic Jews immigrated to Seattle. In the early days of the market, Sephardic Jews dominated fish and produce – both in selling and supplying product.

To them, Pike Place Market epitomized the New World, their introduction to America coming through the camaraderie of daily life behind the vendor stalls. The influence of Sephardic merchants is still felt today at the market, which continues to thrive as the longest continually run farmer's market in the U.S.



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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UW1031

Sephardic immigrant **Nessim Chiprut** holds a large fish, probably at Pike Place Market. (1920s)



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A group of Sephardic men socialize while eating seafood inside the garage of **Pacific Fish & Oyster Co.** (1940-45)

FROM THE SEA

Palace Fish Co. Pacific Fish & Oyster Co.

Nessim Alhadeff in 1904 became the first Sephardic Jew to immigrate to Seattle from Rhodes. He sold fish out of a basket, then a pushcart, and eventually a horse-and-buggy. Nessim spoke fluent Greek, making it easy for him to connect with Pike Place Market vendors who had emigrated from Greece. He opened **Palace Fish Co.** along Seattle's waterfront in 1912, selling product to his Market contacts, local restaurants, and (on Thursdays and Fridays) to corner grocery stores that had a lot of Catholic customers. His three sons – **Charlie, Jack** and **Ike** – eventually ran the family's seafood business under the name **Pacific Fish & Oyster Co.** The brothers distributed salmon and halibut nationwide, buying fish directly off the boats that docked at seaport towns. They also operated salmon canneries in the states of Washington and Alaska.



COURTESY OF THE AMON FAMILY

Solly Amon (front) with his crew at **Pure Food Fish**, from about 20 years ago.

Pure Food Fish Market

Jack Amon came to America from Turkey in 1911 and immediately began selling seafood from a stall at Pike Place Market. He bought his own fish stand there in the 1950s and eventually turned management over to his son, **Solly**, so he could retire. That business – **Pure Food Fish Market** – continues to operate as a long, narrow counter inside the heart of Pike Place Market. Among other things, the shop is famous for its fragrant open-air display containing several different varieties of delectable smoked salmon. Pure Food is the last remaining fish stall at Pike Place Market that a Sephardic family owns. Although Solly no longer manages day-to-day operations of the business, he still shows up to work every weekday!



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David Mossafer was famous for his produce. And his cigar!

FROM THE LAND

United Fruit Company

Descending from a long line of rabbis, **David Mossafer** was advised by his father: "Don't be a rabbi. It's not an easy life." So he trained as a boot maker in Rhodes until the Young Turk Revolution compelled his exit for America at age 19. In 1909, he resettled in Seattle and opened a shoe repair shop. By 1912, he had developed lung problems from the fumes and needed to find a new line of work. He opened a fruit stand in Pike Place Market with his relative, **Marco Franco**. For David, Marco and other Sephardic Orthodox Jews, working at the Market on Saturdays during the Sabbath Day of Rest was a difficult decision – but a necessary compromise to keep the business going. By 1928, David's business had grown into a chain of 18 produce stands throughout the Seattle area called **United Fruit Company**.



Publix Fruit & Produce Co.

John Calderon arrived in Seattle in 1914, having left his home in Turkey to avoid conscription into the Army. After working in the shipyards during World War I, he went into the produce business as a buyer for two supermarket chains. With limited capital, John opened his own fruit and vegetable market in 1931. Sons **Vic** and **Jack** helped out in the afternoons. John's wife **Mathilda** provided money from her household savings to help grow the business. At its peak, **Publix Fruit & Produce Co.** operated 30 trucks and became the primary produce wholesaler in Seattle, selling to almost every big restaurant in town, as well as hotels, ships and hospitals.

John Calderon was a fixture on Seattle's Produce Row.

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KOSHER CANYON

"La Judería" of Seattle

From the 1920s to 1960s, Seattle's Jewish community clustered around a neighborhood nicknamed **Kosher Canyon**. Family life revolved around synagogues, schools, social organizations – and also the abundance of kosher butcher shops, specialty bakeries and grocery stores that neighborhood families operated to serve the unique needs of the Jewish community.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many merchants generously extended credit to community members, and some stores failed to survive as a result. Stores closed early on Friday and all day Saturday in observance of the Jewish Sabbath, as well as on major Jewish holidays. All other times, the stores filled with chatter and cheer – doubling as gathering places for an entire community.



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American Kosher Meat Market

Each Thursday, **Joseph Romey's American Kosher Meat Market** squawked with activity after receiving its weekly delivery of freshly killed whole chickens. Jewish families stood in line to buy the still-warm kosher fowl, which would be prepared and served during Friday night's traditional Sabbath dinner.

Columbia Printing

When Turkish immigrant **Joseph Souriano** opened **Columbia Printing Company** in the 1930s, he became the only printer in town to feature Hebrew type. As a result, the Jewish community relied on him as a source for bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah and wedding invitations.



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Economy Grocery

On a typical evening, the Sephardic men of Kosher Canyon would gather around the potbelly stove near the front of **Economy Grocery**, a store run by **Al and Rachel Uziel**. The men would sip *kave Turco* (Turkish coffee), take a nip of *Raki* (a Turkish aperitif) and *echar lashon* (a Ladino phrase meaning to sit and gossip).

KOSHER CANYON

Two Jewish Communities within One

Although Sephardic and Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern European) Jews lived together in Kosher Canyon, they spoke different languages, had different customs and ate different foods. As a result, they sometimes made fun of one another.

Abe Hoffman, an Ashkenazi Jew who worked at his father's grocery store in the 1920s and 1930s, called the store's Sephardic customers **"Mazolas"** because they bought so many large tins of Mazola brand cooking oil for sautéing their Mediterranean-style cuisine. Unbeknownst to him, Sephardic Jews irreverently called Ashkenazi Jews **"Shmaltzes"** after the Yiddish word "shmaltz," a processed chicken fat they used for frying and spreading on bread.



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Palace Grocery

Near his family home at the bottom of Kosher Canyon, Rhodes immigrant **Israel Fis** (second from left) ran **Palace Grocery**. His customers sometimes waited until Palace's home-delivery truck was leaving so they could catch a free ride up the hill with their full bags of produce. (1925)

Condiotti's Confectionary

Behor "Benny" Condiotti cooked candies and sweets in huge copper and brass pots, stirring with different sizes of wooden paddles. He then poured his confections onto a huge marble slab and cut them into various shapes and sizes. His recipes originated from his homeland of Turkey, but he also specialized in Greek-style yogurt that he sold in a glass.



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Advertisement flyer for **Scharhon's Poultry & Grocery** in Kosher Canyon. (1952)

Sam's Bakery

Nessim "Sam" Alhadeff baked breads and pastries in a brick oven heated by long wooden logs that burned to ash. Children in Kosher Canyon favored Sam's tiny cream-filled pastries, which he called "Lucky Bites." The centers usually had white cream but occasionally the filling was pink, which would reward the purchaser with a free candy bar.

SERVING ALL OF SEATTLE



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Samuel Nahmias, right, and daughter **Margie** (late 1930s)

Queen City Market Florist

Samuel Nahmias came to the U.S. from Turkey, able to read, write and speak only in Ladino. In the 1920s, he sold brightly colored waxed flowers near a downtown Seattle theatre. In the mid-1930s, he opened a fresh flower shop inside a downtown market and turned it into a thriving business: **Queen City Market Florist**. When it wasn't raining, Sam would sit under the lamppost in front of the market calling out, "Gardenias: 25 cents!" or "Daffodils: 10 cents a dozen!" After working 16 hours on Saturdays, he put the money he earned in a corsage box and hopped a streetcar back home around midnight.



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Allen's Fifth Avenue Jewelers

From 1940 to 1990, **Isaac Ovadia** sold jewelry at four different stores he owned throughout Seattle, including his pride and joy, **Allen's Fifth Avenue Jewelers**. But Ike didn't just sell jewelry, he also designed some of the pieces in his display case. Ike had an appreciation – and an eye – for fine art, having majored in business and minored in art at the University of Washington in Seattle. He once persuaded local abstract painter Mark Tobey to design pieces of jewelry for his shop, which Ike sold alongside his own exquisite designs.

Ike Ovadia, left, outside his jewelry store (1950s or 60s)

STILL AROUND



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Joseph, left, and brother **Isaac** inside an early iteration of **Angel's Shoe Repair**.

Angel's Shoe Repair

Hearing that Seattle's streets were paved with gold, **Joseph Angel** emigrated from Rhodes in 1910. He opened a shoe repair shop two years later with his brother **Isaac**. But times were tough and Joseph's son, **Eli**, had to quit school in ninth grade to help his father with the business. Eli's son, **Ray**, took his father's offer to work as an apprentice – and the rest is history. **Angel's Shoe Repair** remains in business more than 100 years after it began, with Ray in charge. He uses a sewing machine patented in 1880 and a stitching machine from 1912. Ray says it's almost as if his grandfather and father are still at the shop. In many respects, they are!

Seattle Curtain Manufacturing Co.

Ralph Capeluto emigrated from Rhodes in 1920 and stayed in New York, where he repaired sewing machines for a living. While visiting his sister in Seattle, he met his bride-to-be, **Rachel**. She asked him: "How do you intend to support me?" He said he would open a candy store. She said: "Why not try something you know?" So they decided to make curtains. Ralph maintained the equipment and Rachel sold their wares. At the time, curtains were available only from manufacturers on the East Coast. By offering a local supply, **Seattle Curtain Manufacturing Co.** found a regular customer base in the city's big department stores. The family-owned business continues to operate today, housed inside a former roller-skating rink.



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An early **Seattle Curtain Manufacturing** display at a downtown Seattle department store.

SEATTLE'S SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY OF TODAY

HOME TO ONE OF THE LARGEST and most vibrant Sephardic Jewish communities in the U.S., Seattle is preserving the legacy and perpetuating the vitality of Sephardic life.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEPHARDIC ADVENTURE CAMP



Sara Sabbah from Madrid (left) was a **Sephardic Adventure Camp** counselor.

For two weeks each summer, more than 100 children from Seattle (and beyond!) attend **SEPHARDIC ADVENTURE CAMP** to enjoy the outdoors of the Pacific Northwest and get immersed in Sephardic traditions and Jewish values.



SEATTLE SEPHARDIC NETWORK presents cultural programs that celebrate and explore the many dimensions of Sephardic life. It also provides information to the community on a variety of subjects, including the process for descendants of Sephardic Jews to obtain Spanish citizenship.



SEATTLE SEPHARDIC BROTHERHOOD is an all-volunteer organization that offers support and essential services to the community, principally funeral planning and burial. The Brotherhood operates the Seattle Sephardic Cemetery.



THE SEPHARDIC STUDIES PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON is an academic center for the study, teaching and perpetuation of Sephardic history and culture, and the Ladino language. The program inspires student interest through research and coursework, and energizes community involvement through public lectures and events.

The Sephardic Studies **Digital Library and Museum** is an online collection of hundreds of rare Ladino books, archival materials, family letters and photographs dating as far back as the 16th century.

Every autumn, Sephardic Studies commemorates **International Ladino Day** with a community event at the University of Washington featuring stories, songs and lectures about Ladino and Sephardic culture.



MERYL SCHENKER PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON STROUM CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES



MERYL SCHENKER PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON STROUM CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

The members of **LOS LADINEROS** meet each week at Seattle Curtain Manufacturing Co. for a Ladino conversation class. The group entertains the community each year by reading stories during the annual Ladino Day event.



SEATTLE SEPHARDIC NETWORK

Community member **Julie De Leon** makes bulemas, a savory pastry stuffed with spinach and cheese.

SEPHARDIC FOOD IS A TASTY TRADITION

WHEN MEMBERS

of Seattle's Sephardic community get together, plenty of good food is always on the table. The community's cuisine is a delicious combination of dishes from Greece, Turkey, North Africa and Spain.

Delicacies bearing an Iberian influence include: *albóndigas*, *espinacas con garbanzos*, *calabasas*, *fideo*, *biscochos* and *arroz con leche*.

Women from the community make *biscochos*, a braided sweet cookie topped with sesame seeds.



MERYL SCHENKER PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON STROUM CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES



SEATTLE SEPHARDIC NETWORK

Yesterday's Mavens

"My older sister and I attempted our first Sephardic recipe of 'pink rice' for our father shortly after our mother's death. The first attempt was mush and the second, burnt. No matter what, our father ate everything we made. He would say, 'Es pecado,' (a sin, a waste to throw away food). When my cousin tasted my food, she said I had 'bendichas manos' (blessed hands)."

– Rachel Ameleh

"Marzipan ('masapan' in Ladino) is a sweet Sephardic confection traditionally served for important life cycle events like baby namings, bar mitzvahs and weddings. Marzipan represents good health and the celebration of life, as its key ingredient is almonds, which contain essential nutrients of life."

– Sharon Cordova Lott

Quotes from the book:
Yesterday's Mavens, Today's Foodies: Traditions in Northwest Jewish Kitchens, a publication of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society

SEATTLE'S SEPHARDIC FAMILIES



COURTESY OF SEPHARDIC BIKUR HOLIM CONGREGATION



DAVID JACOBY

Founded more than a century ago, **Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation** and **Congregation Ezra Bessaroth** remain the spiritual core of Seattle's Sephardic community and its families.



DAVID JACOBY

Bronze plaques are placed on the inside walls of both synagogues to memorialize community members who have passed on.

Family Names

Many of the surnames prominent within Seattle's Sephardic community are of Spanish origin. How many of these family names do you recognize from Spain?

Agoado	Bendicha	De Jaen	Levy	Reina
Altaras	Calderon	De Leon	Maimon	Soriano
Angel	Calvo	Franco	Mayo	Toledo
Behar	Cordova	Galante	Policar	Varon

"Dear Sephardim, thank you for your loyalty and for holding like a cherished treasure your language – Judeo-Spanish or djudezmo as well as Haketia – and your customs, which are none other than our own. And thank you, too, for making love prevail over rancor and for teaching your children to love this Spanish homeland."

HIS ROYAL MAJESTY KING FELIPE VI

During a November 2015 ceremony with Sephardic Jews at the Royal Palace in Madrid (translated from Spanish)



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Seattle Sephardic
Brotherhood



THE RITA AND HERBERT ROSEN FOUNDATION

LOEB FAMILY CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS

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