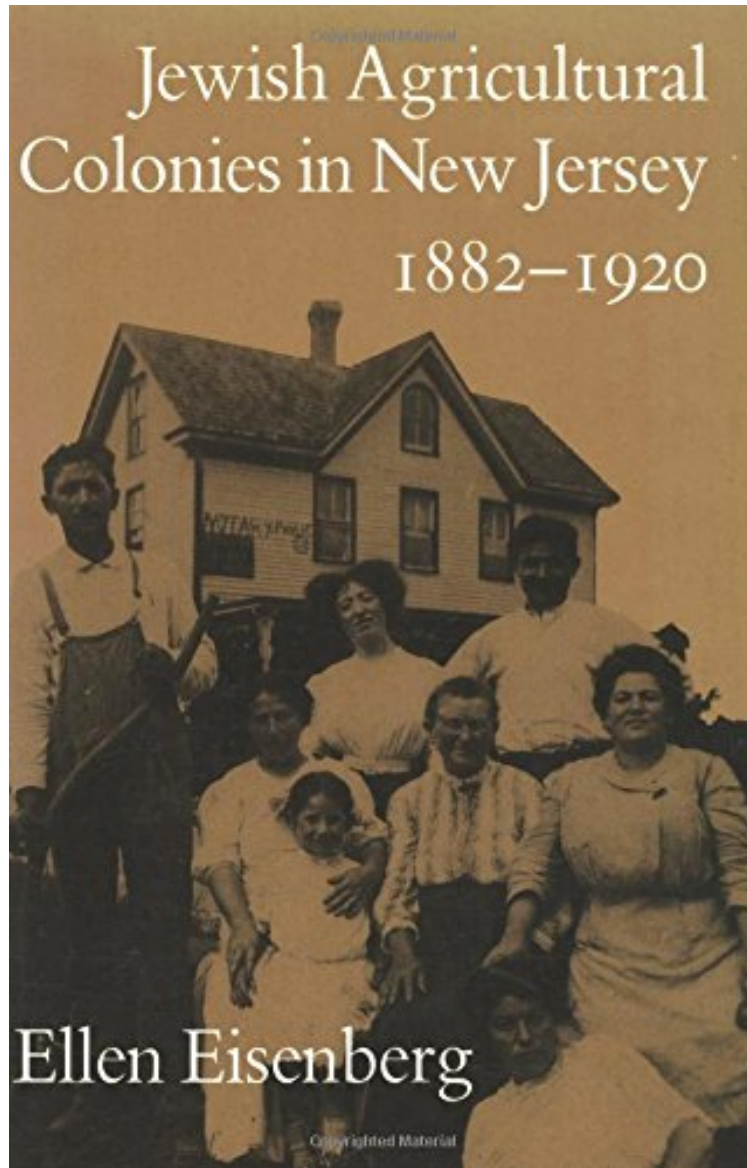


## Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882-1920 (Utopianism and Communitarianism)

*Ellen Eisenberg*

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**Ellen Eisenberg : Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882-1920 (Utopianism and Communitarianism)**  
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882-1920 (Utopianism and Communitarianism):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Jewish Farming Experiment in America has cultural overtones  
By David Few people who review books have at least two additional insights into the story. This book is about the founding of a number of Jewish agricultural colonies in the US in the 1880's. And much of the content is focused on the colony at Norma / Alliance / Brotmansville, New Jersey, where; (1) I was born and grew up in Norma and today, a sister and two brothers live nearby and (2) both my late cousin, Shirley Crystal Goren the granddaughter of a founding member and I were interviewed by the author, Ellen Eisenberg when she was researching this book, while I believe Ellen was a student at Syracuse University. Ellen is related to one of the founders of the Alliance Colony and while Ellen wrote about many other colonies, it is clear to me that her best sources were from our community because of her family roots here. That close family connection I feel enhanced her excellent and diligent gathering of information that I greatly respect and from all that I have read, this book is the single best representation of the story of these early Jewish colonies in America. This book presents several remarkable social issues that may be difficult for 21st century readers to understand. The controversial reason for the creation of the establishment of the Norma/Alliance/Brotmansville colony and other colonies in the US in the 1880's, including; early attempts in Louisiana, and Bethlehem, SD, and later in Alliance, Rosenhayn, Lakewood and Woodbine NJ -- the brainchild of wealthy European Jews; Baron de Hirsh, Jacob Schiff - and by the names of Norma's, Alliance's and Brotmansville's streets you can ascertain that organizers and supporters of the cause were people named; Gershal, Eppinger, Levishohn, Isaacs, Rosenfeltd, Muscovitz and honors were given Presidents Cleveland and Harrison with their own streets -- this project was undertaken to help Jews get out of the cities of Europe and improve their image as former traders and shop keepers, to what was then characterized as a more ethical and honest form of work, agriculture. This is a notion that those who buy and sell goods, are not creating goods from the sweat of their work, therefore they are earning income from the work of others. Benjamin Franklin was a proponent of this idea. Franklin called agriculture "the only honest way, wherein man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground in the kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favor, as a reward for his innocent life and his virtuous industry." [Franklin's quote courtesy World of Influence]. European Jews, tired of the difficult and restricted business and lack of work opportunities in Russia, Poland and Galicia as well as fear about being taken in the military draft, an enslavement from which few returned - taking them as teenagers to go and fight in wars that they did not even understand, took the offer for a new life as farmers in the new world as a way to climb out of the repressive, anti-Jewish Eastern European environment. Most of the volunteers had no real agricultural knowledge. The only related job experience they had was managing estates, a Gutsbesitzer, estate manager, a job for a literate Jew with basic math and writing skills, a job that involved counting of the owners assets, keeping track of the farm's production and serf labor force. This, as you will note, did not suffice for success in farming in the new world, which came with special challenges, one crop, one or a few payments in late summer was the total compensation for a year's work. In one generation, most of the children, bereft of the desire to get closer to the earth, opened a business or profession in nearby Vineland, Bridgeton or Millville - so much for the great plan. I gave this book 5 stars. David Kornbluh 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book Just wish she had done more research on ... By Andrea Bjerger Great book Just wish she had done more research on the Jewish agricultural colonies in Atlantic County. Its an easy read, good pix and lots of memories for anyone having lived in this area.

Most of the synagogues are gone; a temple has been converted into a Baptist church. There is little indication to the passerby that the southern New Jersey's Salem and Cumberland counties once contained active Jewish colonies-the largest and most successful in fact, of the settlement experiments undertaken by Russian-Jewish immigrants in America during the late nineteenth century. Ellen Eisenberg's work focuses on the transformation of these colonies over a period of four decades, from agrarian, communal colonies to private mixed industrial-agricultural communities. The colonies grew out of the same "back to the land" sentiment that led to the development of the first modern Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine. Founded in 1882, the settlements survived for over thirty years. The community of Alliance's population alone grew to nearly 1000 by 1908. Originally established as socialistic agrarian settlements by young idealists from the Russian Jewish Am Olam movement, the colonies eventually became dependent on industrial employment, based on private ownership. The early independent, ideological settlers ultimately clashed with the financial sponsors and the migrants they recruited, who did not share the settlers' communitarian and agrarian goals.

About the Author Ellen Eisenberg is Assistant Professor of history at Willamette University.