THE JEWS OF BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE: ADDENDUM

HAROLD POLLINS

In Volume LII 2010, some important information was omitted from The Jews of Boston, Lincolnshire, paragraph 3 page 57. That paragraph should be replaced by the following:

Cecil Roth ended his book on provincial Jewry at about 1840 although with some references to later events and people. He referred to one man who lived there in the 18th century, about 1779-80, and to Mary Myers who was born in the town in 1799. Otherwise he wrote particularly of Henry Lewis Leo, born c1800 in London, who married Mary Myers in Boston in 1822. One person he missed was Sarah Moses, born in Boston in about 1818, daughter of Bedford-born Emanuel, a watch maker, who travelled greatly, three children being born in Ipswich and one in London. Sarah married Swansea-resident John Moses Moses (also born in Bedford) as his second wife in 1852 and settled in Swansea. But more important is the fact that there was apparently a synagogue in Boston, at least as early as 1812. A local newspaper reported a wedding which took place on 29 January 1812 ‘at the Jewish Synagogue in Boston’, between Mr Levy, a Silversmith in the High Street and Miss Levy of Bargate, Boston. A synagogue, even if it had been only a room in a dwelling-house, presupposes a number of resident Jews; but their names are unknown. One wonders who conducted the marriage ceremony.

There is no doubt that soon after that, and at least by the 1840s, the community ceased to exist. The Chief Rabbi’s survey of 1845 did not mention Boston, nor did the Religious Census of 1851. When the new congregation was formed in the early 1890s the Jewish Chronicle (JC) said, fairly accurately, that this was after ‘a lapse of nearly a century’. Confirmation, perhaps, of the absence of a community is the fact that when two Boston residents were married in the town in 1857 the ceremony was carried out by Rev. L. Goldberg of the Nottingham Hebrew Congregation. The celebrants were Rosina Leo, the youngest daughter


81
of Henry Lewis Leo, and Benjamin Abrahams, and it took place in her father’s house in Red Lion Street, Boston.4

Rosina Leo had been born in Hull in about 1830 but her two sisters, Abigail and Elizabeth, were born in Boston in about 1826 and 1828 respectively; they remained unmarried. Roth said that ‘the Leo family’ were ‘traditionally quill-pen manufacturers, and at the same time cigar and sweet-merchants’. In the 1841 Census Leo is described as a ‘quill dresser’, in 1851 as a general shopkeeper, and in 1861 as a tobacconist. He died just before the 1871 Census but his widow then became the tobacconist, in the few months before she died.5

There were many items about Boston in the JC from its beginnings in 1841 but apart from a report of 1848 describing a public meeting in favour of the Bill to allow Jews to sit in Parliament, they were almost entirely about the Leo family. They consisted largely of their contributions to various Jewish charities, sometimes noting that the money had been collected from Christian friends.6

NOTES


3 JC, 8 July 1892, p. 17.

4 ibid., 27 February 1857, p. 913. Also Lincoln Mercury, 27 February 1857 (from Pat Pomeroy). I take it that the wedding was carried out by a Nottingham officiant, and was thus registered in that town, because there was no Jewish Secretary for Marriages in Boston. Rosina was probably named after her grandmother, Rosina Myers (called Rosina Lyons in Roth’s book, p. 34), who died in Boston in 1847. JC, 31 December 1847, p. 379.

5 Strangely, the notice of his death on 10th March 1871 describes him as ‘MRCP, of Bevis Marks, London’. Roth (page 33) notes that his father was ‘Dr. Lewis Leo of Bevis Marks’. It is likely that the death notice was garbled and was meant to read that he was the son of Dr Leo. The death notice is reprinted from the JC in Doreen Berger, The Jewish Victorian: Genealogical Information from the Jewish Newspapers 1871–1880.