



# Hadassah and the Zionist Project

*Erica B. Simmons*

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## **Hadassah and the Zionist Project** Erica B. Simmons

Founded to give women a frontline role in the Zionist struggle for statehood, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, first sent public health nurses to Palestine in 1913. Despite clashing with other Zionist organizations as it fought to keep control of its own projects, Hadassah grew to be the largest single American Zionist organization in the interwar period. Using original historical documents, Simmons examines Hadassah's roots in the American Progressive movement, and assesses some of the American field-tested projects which Hadassah exported to Palestine including visiting nurses, school lunches, and playgrounds. Hadassah chose each project carefully with a view to developing an egalitarian, democratic Jewish state. Simmons also traces Hadassah's involvement in the Youth Aliyah child rescue movement which saved thousands of youngsters from Nazi-occupied Europe, as well as from the beleaguered Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa. In the first decades of statehood, Youth Aliyah education tried to make Israelis out of young refugees from all over the world. Simmons offers a fresh perspective on Hadassah's place in history and shows, for the first time, how American Jewish women played a leading role in achieving Zionist goals and shaping the Jewish state. The book is distinguished by its historical approach, rooted in the analysis of original archival material including publicity brochures, newsletters and correspondence, as well as the contemporary Zionist and mainstream American press. It is intended for students, scholars, and anyone interested in American Jewish history, Israeli history, women's studies, Jewish women; the history of voluntarism, philanthropy, public health, social welfare, or child welfare; Progressivism, the history of Zionism and the development of the State of Israel; Diaspora-Israel relations; Jewish organizations; ethnic studies; emergence of the welfare state.

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