Just over a decade after Abbott Lowell replaced Charles Eliot as president of Harvard University, Harvard drastically changed the policies and practices that guided university admissions. While Lowell had suggested that the University impose a quota system and place explicit limits on Jewish admits, the new plan – proposed in 1923 – rejected quotas and instead outlined a holistic admissions process that would be less “quantitative” and place greater emphasis on individual attributes like “good character” and sociability. I argue that this new admissions policy, cloaked in meritocratic rhetoric, was in fact designed to limit the admissions of minority students, especially Jewish students. I depart from previous analyses that place significant blame on Lowell’s own outlook, and instead find that the policy reform was driven by a broad movement within the Harvard community that considered Jews its primary target. Opposition to the new plan was limited and emerged almost exclusively from the Jewish community. Like recent scholarship, contemporaneous opposition to admissions reform focused its criticism on Lowell himself and not on the new “holistic” policy or the Harvard alumni network that drove the policy change. As a result, the new admissions policy emerged from the 1920s largely unscathed and remains influential in the admissions policies of many elite universities today. While present day admissions committees and alumni lobbies do not likely share the bigoted views of many of their 1920s counterparts, Harvard’s “new plan” has lasting implications and adds to an ongoing dialogue about how we decide who “deserves” admission to top schools.