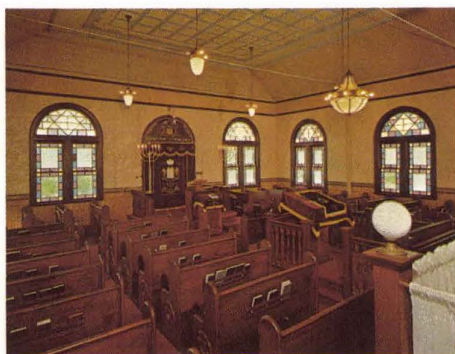


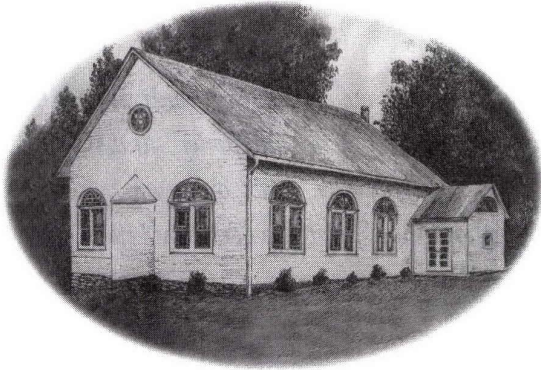


Congregation Anshei Hashoron

1899 – 1999

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Congregation Anshei Hashoron

A history of the first hundred years

1899 – 1999

By Dr. Jacob L. Halberstam

*Only this insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the
World – viz. that what has happened, and is happening
every day, is not only not
“without God”, but is essentially His Work.*

CONCLUDING SENTENCE OF
THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY (1830–1831)
BY GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL
TRANSLATED BY J. SIBREE, M.A.
WILEY BOOK CO., NEW YORK 1944

Congregation Anshei Hashoron

1899 – 1999

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Historiographers choose and combine those elements of a story which they deem important or valuable to “preserve for eternity”. Otherwise, why write it down? The story of a small one-hundred year old small congregation, in a little Catskill Region village, is no exception. The most impressive and important element in the story of Congregation Anshei Hashoron of Tannersville, New York, is the following fact: For one hundred years, without a single interruption, the congregation managed – some would say miraculously – to hold daily and Sabbath services during the summer months. Equally impressive, given the small size of the Jewish community of Tannersville, is the fact that for one hundred years, at times through the financial backing of individuals, but mostly through communal effort, it maintained a kosher Mikveh. The Mikveh was operational year round – when Jewish inhabitants of Tannersville lived in the village all year but only during the summer months when the Jewish population consisted primarily of summer vacationers.

This is not a scholarly history. Nor is it an objective history. One person cannot have been an eye witness to all the important, formative events of an institution’s one hundred years of existence even if that one person had been of sound mind and memory for the entire century. Therefore the story here told is a distillate of many stories collected from a variety of sources. Needless to say, they all are colored by the attitudes, prejudices, beliefs, or failings of the collector and/or the tellers of the stories.

The writer is deeply concerned about the congregation’s continuity, and about its physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Along with all the current members and worshipers at the beautiful sanctuary, this writer looks forward to the fulfillment of Rabbi Eleazer Ha-Kappar’s prediction (Megillah 29a):

תניא ר אליעזר הקפר אומר עתידין בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל שיקבעו בארץ ישראל שנאמר (ירמיה מ"ו: יח) ... כי כתבור בהרים וככרמל בים יבא. והלא דברים ק"ו ומה תבור וכרמל שלא באו אלא לפי שעה ללמוד תורה נקבעים בארץ ישראל בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שקורין ומרביצין בהם תורה עאכ"ו.

"It has been taught: Rabbi Eliezer Ha-Kappar says: The synagogues and houses of learning in Babylon will in time to come be planted in Eretz Israel, as it says (Jer. 46:18): For, as Tabor among the mountains and as Carmel by the sea came: Can we not draw an inference here a fortiori: Seeing that Tabor and Carmel, which came only on a single occasion to learn the Torah, are implanted in Eretz Israel, how much more so must this be the case with the synagogues and houses of learning where the Torah is read and from where it is spread [among many.]"

J E W S O F T A N N E R S V I L L E

There are no accurate records of when Jews settled in Tannersville or in any of the nearby communities. On the basis of meager evidence, most writers of "Histories of the Catskills" assume that Jewish peddlers visited/settled in this region some time after 1890.

Kanfer (1989, pp.32-33) notes that in 1880 the millionaire Ohio senator of "Hungarian Jewish Origin," Charles F. Fleischmann, bought 60 acres in Griffin's Corner, near the Ulster and Delaware station, and saw to it that the town signs were changed to read "Fleischmanns."

What Kanfer fails to mention is that the rich senator from Ohio, famous for his ostentatious style and lavish family entertainments, was not born Jewish despite his "origins." Perhaps Kanfer connected the senator to "Jews," because the senator's grandiose life-style had led to thinly veiled anti-semitic/xenophobic editorials in the regional newspapers.

There is no doubt that individual Jews had settled in some Catskill region communities as early as the first half of the 19th century. Thus, Field Horne reports (p. 93) that, "David Friedman, a German Jew, worked in Edward's Tannery in the 1840's." Horne also reports that during the post-Civil war era, German-speaking vacationers, including substantial numbers of Jews, became a large part of the Catskills resort trade. Of course, anti-Semitism, the permanent scourge of the Jews, could not be far behind. In 1877 Judge Henry Hilton, manager of the Grand Union Hotel, whom Horne describes as " ... at best an unpleasant person", refused lodging to the wealthy Jewish banker Joseph Seligman" (p. 93). That episode, which some historians labeled "a storm," caused a lively newspaper debate in the area. Horne quotes from the Catskill Examiner: "In the limits of our village we have a number of these descendants of Solomon, and if we have observed rightly, a better class of visitors could not be desired." (P. 93). Unfortunately, there were many more detractors of the Jewish vacationers.

Als Evers (1972), the best known and probably the most thorough chronicler of the developments of the Catskills, maintains that the completion of the U&D Railroad to the mountain-top just before 1890 brought many Jewish vacationers to the Hunter-Tannersville area. Thus, by the year 1890, there is Simon Epstein's first "Jewish Boarding House." To quote directly:

By 1890 the U & D had speeded up service and the boarding-house keepers of

Tannersville were prospering. It was then that Simon Epstein moved up from Saxton and began operation of the Grandview House in Hunter, the first large "Jewish Boardinghouse" to appear in the high Catskills – many others quickly followed. They provided food and an atmosphere in which people of Jewish cultural background felt at home. These Boardinghouses were by no means all alike, for each catered to people of one or the other of many subdivisions of Jewish life. The Hotel Kaaterskill and the Grand now admitted Jews without argument, while the Catskill Mountain House still did its best to keep them out – but without entire success.

Bertram E. Schwarzbach, PhD, a longtime member of Congregation Anshei Hashoron, and the son of Joseph Schwarzbach, its Treasurer for many years, writes in 1974, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary celebration of the synagogue:

In 1892 Dov Yitzchak Honigsbaum climbed up the Platte Clove mountain with his peddler's pack on his back and died of a heart attack on the spot. Despite this inauspicious introduction to the mountaintop, his sons, Frank and Mike, followed him and settled in Tannersville, at first peddling among the farm families scattered about the mountaintop, selling all sorts of manufactured wares and bartering for the produce of the farms. Around 1900 Mike established a grocery in town and Frank a dry goods and department store (with the winnings from a lottery), a tannery in Elka Park, south of Dibble's Dam, and later another one on the creek behind his store, the present Turtle Neck Inn. The Honigsbaums and the Warms who followed them to Tannersville came from Russia, as the inscriptions in their prayer books show. They and the other Jewish settlers appear to have been part of the wave of emigration from Russia and Poland at the end of the 19th century, but neither Frank nor Mike arrived in Tannersville right off the boat. They and the others seem to have accumulated some modest capital, enough to open small businesses, so they must have peddled or worked in the factories in New York and begun their Americanization before coming to Tannersville. Sam and Yossel Warm came as peddlers. Yossel remained in the profession, buying butter and eggs from the various farmers and supplying the stores and hotels, while Sam and his wife soon opened a hotel. Other Jewish families bought and operated the older hotels, converting them from general clientele to a "high class" Jewish trade. Clothiers, furriers and textile men from New York came with their families by rail for the healthful air, a Catskill equivalent of the European custom of vacationing at a spa.

Various members of the congregation remember the Blumenthals, Feldsteins, Jacobsons, Mariashs, and Tamers as Tannersville residents. Schwarzbach listed:

"Aks the baker, Cohen the butcher, Romanow and Abrams, the grocers, Olinsky (Olin), the hardware and plumbing supplier, Plotsky and Avnet who had department stores, and Amos Gordon, the tavern keeper" among the Jewish inhabitants of Tannersville in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Especially worthy of mention is Mrs. Sarah Honigsbaum, a pious woman, who single-handedly kept the fires of Judaism alive in Tannersville. May God remember unto her for all the good that she has done for His people. זכרה לה אלקי לטובה כל אשר עשתה על העם הזה.

Not only did she offer Hachnosas Orchim to the many rabbis and meshulachim (collectors of donations for charitable institutions) who passed through Tannersville, but she also opened her home for religious services when needed. Most remarkably, she built a Mikveh in her house which she maintained at her own expense. Although it is not documented, Schwarzbach (1974) states: "She charged the townswomen a fee for the use of her Mikveh and the income was sent to various charities in Israel."

Years later, the Mikveh was built in the community house, again with the help of Sarah Honigsbaum. At that time, she was generously assisted financially and organizationally by Mrs. Annie Golding. These righteous women, helped by others, truly kept the embers of Judaism alive in Tannersville.

Annie Golding's home, like Abraham's tent, became a symbol of Jewish hospitality. The famous, and not so famous rabbis and Roshei Yeshiva who came to Tannersville were always welcome and cared for in her house. As the number of those seeking help for the oppressed Jewish institutions/communities in Europe grew, so did Annie Golding's involvement and charitable efforts. She was justly famous for her Tzedaka and Chesed.

By the 1890's the Jewish presence on the mountain-top was both substantial and documented. In Hunter, Harry Fischel, the New York real estate magnate and well known philanthropist, built a summer home in 1904, and a synagogue in 1905. By that time the Slutzkys were already known as a year-round and communally involved family in Hunter. Their descendants are still residing here and remain major supporters of all mountain top institutions and causes. In Tannersville, the Abrams and Honigsbaum families were well established residents by then. Horne states (p. 95): *"The impact of Jewish vacationers on the Town of Hunter was considerable. In 1907 Tannersville hosted the tenth annual convention of the American Zionists. By the early 1920s over one hundred Tannersville area boarding houses served kosher food, keeping seven kosher butchers busy."*

CONGREGATION ANSHEI HASHORON 1899

The facts of the Founding:

Spelled differently in different documents, Congregation Anshei Hashoron was officially incorporated on October 9, 1899. On September 14, 1899, one month before the official date of incorporation, Congregation Anshei Hashoron had bought a parcel of land on Main Street for \$300 from the heirs of Mr. James Brown. On December 12, 1900 the property was mortgaged to Mr. Jacob Fromer for \$600, and signed by Amos Gordon, President of Anshi Hashoran.

The congregation was officially incorporated by Morris Ahlio, J. Averic, Lewis Loff, Solomon Weinhandler, Morris Abrahams, Meyer Abrahams, Isaac Orlinsky, M. Honigsbaum and T. Honigsbaum. The first four were probably regular vacationers in Tannersville. This chronicler's sources could not supply any information about these individuals or where they came from. The other five named were Tannersville residents whose connection to the congregation is known.

Two descriptions of the Founding:

Bertram Schwarzbach, in his history of Anshei Hashoran written in 1974, gives the impression that the congregation was founded as a conservative synagogue, affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary. Similarly, Evers (1972) states that Anshei Hashoran was organized as a "reformed" synagogue. This chronicler, together with Mr. Eli Resnikoff, the long term Counsel of the congregation, carefully searched the records of the congregation in 1974, and again in 1975. There are no records in the congregation that would justify the claim that the synagogue was not Orthodox from the very beginning. In fact the Board of Trustees adopted the position, on more than one occasion, that as long as a single member wanted the congregation to remain Orthodox, the Orthodox tradition could not be changed. For a more detailed discussion of this see Appendix A.

D E V E L O P M E N T

The permanent Jewish residents of Tannersville acquired the present synagogue and community house on February 8, 1912 when Max Romanow and his wife Rebecca deeded the property to a "Congregation Talmud Torah" for \$1. The land was originally owned by Oscar Langer. However, Congregational records show that Max Romanow also transferred two mortgages on the property, one in the name of William Hauer and one in the name of William Simmons. The document does not show the amount of the mortgages. Schwarzbach (1974) states that the mortgage (he uses the singular) was for \$1,500. No one has offered any reasonable explanation as to why a Congregation Talmud Torah, which had incorporated in August of 1911, was deeded the property that was clearly meant to house the synagogue of Congregation Anshei Hashoron. Many years ago, Mr. Eli Resnikoff, the attorney for the congregation, together with this writer, examined the various congregational charters. Resnikoff thought that there may have been a legal or tax reason why a hoped-for religious school would have benefited from its own charter. That, he thought, was especially true in view of the fact that Congregation Anshei Hashoron owned a building and property on Main Street. Unfortunately, this writer cannot recall the reasons Mr. Resnikoff offered.

The two congregations merged on October 4, 1960, as shown in a document filed with the Supreme Court, County of Greene. Signing the merger for Congregation Talmud Torah were Sam and Joseph Warm, and for Congregation Anshei Hashoron, Joseph Buchsbaum, its president. That the two congregations were in fact one institution is obvious from the facts that Congregation Anshei Hashoron was physically located on the property owned since 1911 by Congregation Talmud Torah, and that Congregation Talmud Torah never erected its own building. The reason for the legal merger is rather simple: The congregation needed money for maintenance and repair of the synagogue, more than it could raise from its diminished membership.

Therefore, in November or December 1959 the congregation sold the land it owned adjacent to its current property to the New York Telephone Company. The property, sold at a profit, had been acquired by the congregation for \$1,000 on October 12, 1954 from the Estate of Philip Krakauer. It would appear that Anshei Hashoron needed to show that it owned the land it stood on and therefore was legally entitled to sell part of its property.

At this point it must be mentioned that there are few official documents of the congregation from 1912 to 1954. Much of what is said about this period is based on people's recollections, or on commonly shared anecdotes. Some of this material is worth mentioning because of the partial light it sheds on an otherwise obscure period.

A short time after the property was deeded to Congregation Talmud Torah, a Shochet and Melamed were engaged. The latter resided in the apartment over the Social Hall, which is still the residence for the Rabbi hired by the congregation. Both men were paid directly by the families for any services they rendered. Schwarzbach (1974) states that the *"...Shochet was paid 5 cents for each chicken that he killed and \$2 for each calf or cow, while the religious instruction of three mischievous boys cost ... \$2 and later with inflation, \$5 a week."* If these fees are correct, then neither the Shochet nor the Melamed became rich. Small wonder these gentlemen frequently left. No individual currently affiliated with the congregation can recall the names of the early Shochtim or Melamdin.

Ms. Justine Hommel, the Town of Hunter historian, informed this writer that the synagogue was moved to its present location by Mr. James Wiltse. Ms. Hommel adds: "His daughter told me it was moved in pieces by his team of horses." There is no accurate record of the exact day or even year of the move. This writer's attempt to find an eye witness with a good memory of the event failed. Schwarzbach (1974) reports two conflicting dates. Mr. Jacob Simon told him that the synagogue was already in its new location in 1918 when he arrived in Tannersville, while Mr. Wiltse, who actually moved it, was certain that it was "shortly after 1920." Schwarzbach also reports: *"The whole interior was refurbished and the fire proof tin walls, the height of fashion at the time, were installed by Isaac Olin, possibly with the proceeds of the sale of the Anshei Hashoron property to Mr. Paul Fromer."*

The Jewish resident population of Tannersville continued to grow until about 1925, despite the decline of the lavish Jewish hotels. Some writers suggest that after the introduction of the automobile, Sullivan County won out over Greene County because it was closer to New York City and a less strenuous trip. Horne (1944) maintains that bank financing *"was easier for Jewish hoteliers in Sullivan than in Greene. Much of the resort trade shifted to the Sullivan County Catskills."* (P.95)

Of the many Jewish hotels and boarding houses Warm's Hotel remained in the original owner's possession. The lack of Jewish communal records makes it impossible to ascertain the names of either those who left or those

who settled in Tannersville. However, it is known that following Mr. Simon's arrival in 1918, a few more Jewish tradesmen settled in Tannersville. Among them was Rheingold, the butcher, Granitz, the baker, Mr. Cotton, (the only "Kohen" for many years) who owned a grocery store on Main Street. Following them were Mr. Rubinger and Dr. Goldstein. Suffice it to say that, following the Depression, there were no longer enough children to support a Melamed. The decline in the number of hotels and boarding houses serving kosher food eliminated the need for a year-round Shochet. During the summer months the services of a Shochet were still needed, and the congregation continued to hire a combination Rabbi-Shochet into the 1950s. In fact, Rabbi Mehrel – from 1954 to 1966 – was the last rabbi who was also a Shochet, but he rarely performed the duties of a Shochet after his first year in Tannersville.

Beginning in the 1930s the synagogue was fully functional only during the summer months. At all other times, such as on the occasion of a Yahrzeit, a Minyan was assembled, but not always in the sanctuary because it did not have an adequate heating system. Mr. Philip Krakauer became president and treasurer of the congregation in the early 30s and continued in that position for a long time. For many years it was through his enterprise and generosity that the "summer months" extended from Shevuoth through Sukkos. The 1930s and 40s are somewhat dark periods in the history of the congregation. The Jewish population had declined and its financial situation after the great Depression was not as good as before. That the financial situation of the congregation deteriorated significantly is evidenced by the fact that there is no record or recollection on the part of even the "old-timers" of any maintenance, repairs or improvements of the physical structure of the synagogue.

There is no question that Congregation Anshei Hashoron was in a state of decline, both physically and spiritually, until about 1950. Poor people and meshulachim continued to come to Tannersville, particularly Eastern European Jews who came to this country as a result of the tragic events of the 1930s. These people were received kindly and helped as much as possible by the remaining Jewish residents of Tannersville and the diminished number of summer vacationers. However, the days of the visits of such luminaries and Geonim as Rabbis Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל, R. Baruch Ber Levovitz זצ"ל and his son-in-law R. Reuven Grozovsky זצ"ל, all of whom were put up hospitably by Mrs. Annie Golding, had passed. It did not seem as if the synagogue, or even the Jewish summer community of Tannersville would long endure. There isn't even a mention anywhere in the records of the congregation, nor does any member recall, any observance of the Jubilee anniversary in 1949.

REVIVAL AND GROWTH

A new dawn began in 1950, as a result of a number of fortuitous events which contributed to a remarkable revival. In the mid 1940's Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer זצ"ל who transplanted Nusach Ashkenaz-Frankfurt to America and built up K'hal Adath Jeshurun in Washington Heights, began spending summers in Hunter. For some reason his usual rental house was not available for the 1950 season. His family searched for another place and by sheer accident heard of a rental on Railroad Avenue in Tannersville. In 1950 Rav Breuer and his family spent their first summer in Tannersville. Of his children, his sons Marc, Jacob and Samson and daughters Rosey, Edith, Sophie and Meta and their families came regularly, some for weekends, and some for the entire summer. In 1955 Meta (Breuer) and Jerry Bechhofer, our current co-president, bought the house on South Main Street next to the synagogue, where Rav Breuer spent every summer until his petira in 1980 at the age of 98.

If the departure of a Tzaddik from a place makes an impression (Rashi Gen. 28:10), then his arrival certainly transforms it. Not only did Rav Breuer's family join him, but other relatives and friends followed. Like a magnet, he attracted many newcomers who initiated the beginning of the revival.

Another significant event in 1950 was Mr. Joseph Buchsbaum's election as president. Buchsbaum was assisted by two able and helpful vice presidents, Mr. Simon Klein and Dr. Benjamin Goldstein. Mr. Joseph Schwarzbach was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the congregation and ran a financial "tight ship." This new administration did much to put the congregation on a sound financial footing. They contributed and raised money for needed repairs, they paid the Rabbi on time and, as Mr. Buchsbaum told this writer, "we even managed to save a little for a rainy day." They organized a Men's Club which only lasted two seasons. Tired weekend visitors preferred to relax and spend time with their families.

The Oneg Shabbat for boys and girls was started in the mid-fifties by Mr. Jacob Breuer and Mr. Herbert Kahn.

Around that time, a few enthusiastic youngsters started the, by now famous, baseball game on Sunday mornings on the Bechhofer lawn. The game was moved to the Village Baseball field many years ago. Its tradition, esprit de corps, and supervision are currently in the able hands of Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald and Jackie Schlanger. Like the Oneg Shabbat for the children, the

baseball game is now a well established tradition enjoyed by both adults and children.

The Sisterhood continues its manifold activities. In addition to sponsoring many cultural and social events, the Sisterhood has raised money and used it to renovate the social hall, the kitchen, the Mikveh, and many other worthy projects. Recently, the Sisterhood established a library of books of Jewish religious interest. All the books are carefully chosen to meet the interests and needs of the congregation's membership. It is named The Tilly Soloff Library, in memory of a "Woman of Valor," who was a highly respected member of our community. The books are housed in a very beautiful cabinet in the social hall and are lent to all members of the sisterhood.

THE RABBIS OF CONGREGATION ANSHEI HASHORON

During Mr. Buchsbaum's presidential tenure many changes were made. Thanks to the financial records that were kept, we know the names, tenure and salaries of the Rabbis. Thus, while Rabbi Tokayer (1948 – 51) was still hired as a Shochet, his duties were defined as Ba'al Tefilla and Ba'al K'riya. The Rabbis' wives received various forms of remuneration for their services at the Mikveh. After Rabbi Tokayer, the Shochet requirement was understated and eventually dropped. Rabbis Rubin (1952) and Schildkraut (1953) served only one year each, by their choice.

Rabbi Gerson Mehrel (1954 – 66) was in Tannersville for 12 years with his wife, daughter and her family. He was the last of the Shochtim rabbis. He was also a talented Sofer and a fine speaker. While giving a D'var Torah in the synagogue between Mincha and Maariv on Shabbat Parshas Korach 1966, he read the verse (Numb. 16:5) "וַיֵּאָתֶּה ה' וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אֵלֶּיּוֹ" (In the morning) the Lord will show who are His, and who is holy and will cause him to come near Him ..." At this point, before he finished reading the verse in the Hebrew text, he fell down, apparently suffering a massive heart attack and returned his soul to his Maker. May his memory be blessed.

Following Rabbi Mehrel, Rabbi Itzkowitz served for two years (1967 – 69). The longest tenured rabbi of the congregation to date was Rabbi Cheskel Spitzer (1970 – 1996). According to Rabbi Spitzer, his wife Suri was instrumental in his coming to Tannersville. She was working as the secretary to the Executive Director at the YMHA in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. She told Rabbi Zev Dov Weinberger, Rabbi of the Williamsburg "Y" that she and her husband were looking for a summer position. Coincidentally, Mr. Eli Resnikoff, a long time trustee of the congregation and its counsel, had told Rabbi Weinberger that Anshei Hashoron was looking for a summer rabbi. Rabbi Weinberger suggested that Rabbi Spitzer might want to look into this possibility. The match was made and the rest is history.

Rabbi Cheskel Spitzer performed many functions at the congregation. He was the Ba'al Tefilla and Ba'al Keriya on Shabbat, Yom Tov, and the High Holidays. He represented the congregation at all official village and town functions. Thus, for example, he was asked to read the names of all who died

serving the country at the annual Memorial Day Observance on Main Street. Rabbi Spitzer also spoke eloquently to those gathered in front of the Veterans Memorial.

Suri Spitzer was always fully involved in the social and charitable activities of the community. In addition to the many responsibilities and obligations she fulfilled for the congregation, she brought pleasure to all the children who eagerly attended the weekly Oneg Shabbat at the synagogues. Rabbi Cheskel and Suri Spitzer were not only appreciated by the membership for their service, but also as friends and neighbors. The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to express the congregation's thanks by giving him the Hakoras Hatov Award at the Centennial Celebration.

Our current Rabbi, Mayer Beller, came to the congregation in 1997. He is an excellent Ba'al K'riya and speaker who delivers thoughtful Divre Torah on most Shabbatot. Rabbi Beller is highly regarded and respected by the congregants. Without his efforts over the past year the new Mikveh would probably not have been ready for the centennial season. Mrs. Beller has supervised the function of the Mikveh for the past two years, the children's Oneg Shabbat, and many other activities. She has added to the pleasant ambience of the community.

CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH - 1960 AND BEYOND

Following the merger of congregations Talmud Torah and Anshei Hashoron, the development of the new congregation is well documented in the minutes of Board meetings and other documents. The Trustees of the merged congregation (1960) were:

Jerry Bechhofer	Henry Rem
Joseph Buchsbaum - <i>President</i>	Robert Schwartz
Dr. Benjamin Goldstein	Joseph Schwarzbach -
Egon Hofbauer	<i>Secretary-Treasurer</i>
Sol Pollack	Joseph Warm

A curiosity item - indicating at least a planned/hoped for growth of the congregation in 1963 - was a proposal by the Board of Trustees to build a Recreation Hall. Although it never materialized, it was definitely an unusual plan. A proposed contract was submitted by I. and O. Slutzky, General Contractors of Hunter, NY, for a "building in the shape of a Jewish Star to be built for \$32,000 to serve as a Recreation Hall." The above cost did not include "heating, plumbing, sidewalks, cabinets or appliances, sewers, chimney, basement area or architect's fee."

In 1965 Mr. Buchsbaum stepped down from the presidency of the congregation and was succeeded by Mr. Henry Rem, who served as president of the congregation from 1965 until he passed away on 13 Shvat 1983, י"ג שבט ה'תשמ"ג. Henry Rem, his wife Mary and their children, have continued to be major supporters of the congregation. Their contributions have permanently and positively affected the well-being of the congregation. When this writer came to Tannersville in 1973, the library of the congregation consisted - in addition to the usual prayer books, Pentateuchs, Selichot and Machzorim - of one set of the Talmud and one set of Mikraot Gedolot, both donations by Mr. Philip Kluberg ז"ל. There was also a glass enclosed bookshelf, a gift of Mr. Resnikoff.

After a number of discussions with the president and some trustees, the writer asked for an appropriation of \$200 to purchase Sifre Kodosh in order to

build up a library for the synagogue. The Board of Trustees approved the request at its 1973 meeting. The Board's endorsement of the goal of building up a synagogue library was crucial. It was Mr. Rem who added the first \$300 to the \$100 contributed by this writer to a separate fund to "enlarge and enrich the library." Thousands of dollars have since been contributed by many worshipers to expand the library.

On February 12, 1995, Mary Rem deeded "the property on South Main and Mansion (Tompkins) Street" to the congregation in the name of the Rem Research and Development Corporation. This generous act insured the peaceful surroundings of the synagogue, since now no one can build a potentially disturbing structure directly opposite the synagogue. During Mr. Rem's tenure as president and, in large measure as a result of his interest and support, a well-run Day Camp was organized in Tannersville. The story of the establishment of the Day Camp deserves its own chapter.

THE DAY CAMP CAMP SHARON

In 1962 Jerry Bechhofer and Mrs. Bechhofer felt a keen need to provide properly organized activities for the children during the summer. Coincidentally, at the same time, Mr. Marc Breuer organized Beis Kayitz, as a "learning camp" for boys of post-Bar Mitzva age at the old "Bader Cottage" on Spring Street, today the site of the beautiful home of the Farber Family and of Camp Sharon.

The first Camp Sharon charged no fees and was conducted on the Bechhofer and synagogue lawns by Dr. "Duddy" Horowitz, then a dental student. Rabbi Walter Mansky headed Camp Sharon after that for one season. Mr. Eric Loeb served as the administrator of both Camp Sharon and Beis Kayitz.

The spiritual leader of Beth Kayitz was Rabbi Hollander. In spite of its success, Beis Kayitz lasted only three or four seasons.

By 1966/67 there were so many families with young children in Tannersville during the summer months that there was a need for more extensive day camp activities. The president, Mr. Rem, and the Board of Trustees realized that families would not continue to return to Tannersville unless there was a structured program for children. Therefore it was decided to provide congregational support for a Day Camp. The initial attempt to have it in and around the community house was not a great success. The Bader Cottage property on Spring Street, by that time no longer used by Beis Kayitz, was acquired by the congregation and named the Henry M. Rem Youth Center. It was clearly intended to be used for the projected Day Camp.

The property in question was acquired by the congregation in a two-step process. First Mr. Egon Hofbauer bought the land in June of 1965 from Julius Reinstein, and assumed a mortgage of \$6,000. Mr. Hofbauer then deeded the property to the congregation in September of 1967. The document does not show the amount of mortgage the congregation assumed. However, it is known that it was not given as a gift to the congregation. What was missing was as a competent individual to organize and run a Day Camp.

Mr. Jacob Breuer, Principal of Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, found a solution to this problem by recommending Rabbi Avrohom Moshe

(Arturo) and Esther Farber. On the first Sunday the Farbers came to Tannersville to inspect the facilities that had been rented, they were less than enthusiastic. It was due to Jerry Bechhofer, who spent a whole Sunday afternoon convincing them, that the Farbers agreed to stay.

Rabbi Farber, a Magid Shiur at the Yeshiva and Mesivta Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in Washington Heights ("Breuer's"), is a multi-talented and energetic individual. He possesses a trained tenor voice which anyone can hear at Congregation Ohab Zedek on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where he serves as the Chazan. If you attend the Shabbat Nachmu Shachris service at Anshei Hashoron, you will hear his beautiful rendition of Shachris. He is also a gifted teacher of both children and adults. As a matter of record, Rabbi Farber has given the Daf Yomi Shiur in Tannersville for over 20 years.

Rabbi and Mrs. Farber opened the Day Camp in 1968 with eight children, on the grounds of a rented house on Fromer Street, and retained the name Camp Sharon. In 1969 it was held on the Rem property. For the two subsequent seasons, the camp was held on Route 214 at Stone Clove Camp, and for an additional two seasons at the American House on Upper Main Street. It is a tribute to the Farbers that, in spite of its wanderings and lack of a permanent home, their Day Camp grew and prospered. On August 19, 1972 the congregation sold the Henry Rem Youth Center property on Spring Street to Rabbi Farber so that a permanent home for the Day Camp could be built. After another two seasons – when the camp functioned at Antonio's, on the road to Elka Park, Camp Sharon finally opened on Spring Street in 1975 .

At the present time the Camp attracts 120-125 children. In 1998 Rabbi and Mrs. Farber had an Olympic swimming pool built for the camp which can be used by men and women at designated hours for a fee. The pool and Day Camp are clearly contributing to the attraction of Tannersville as a summer retreat for orthodox families.

K O S H E R T H I N G S

For three years during the mid-fifties, the Bachrachs, under KAJ supervision, maintained a combination kosher butcher shop, restaurant, and take-out food establishment. It did not thrive. For more than two decades after the Bachrachs' attempt to sell kosher provisions exclusively, no one attempted to open a "kosher store" in Tannersville. In 1982 Debbie Fensterheim who, as *The Windham Journal* of July 22, 1982 reported "... calls herself Julia Waldbaum of the Mountain Top has brought to the area a kosher store..." Assisted by their children, the Fensterheims opened "Kosher Things" on Main Street adjacent to Prince Realty.

Neither Debbie nor her attorney husband Asher Fensterheim had ever operated a grocery store before. Their attempt to do so during the summer months was more of a communal service than a business for profit. Indeed, both Congregation Anshei Hashoron of Tannersville and the Hunter Congregation sent thank-you notes to the Fensterheims in appreciation of their effort in establishing a kosher store. After five years, Kosher Things moved into the American Legion Building where it operated for an additional five years. After it closed in 1992, Kosher Things was sorely missed. It was obvious that the Fensterheims were not going to continue the service in perpetuity. So far, no one else has started a new venture of this type. Instead, a number of alternative arrangements have been made with local and neighboring community stores. Mostly, members of the congregation bring kosher provisions from their year-round communities.

M O R E R E C E N T D E V E L O P M E N T S

Nathan Hanfling was elected President of Anshei Hashoron in 1983. He served until 1987, when he insisted that others take over his duties. As a genuine expression of respect and affection, the Board decided to elect Nathan Hanfling Honorary President for Life. The Hanfling presidency, like the preceding Rem presidency, was marked by many improvements in the physical plant of the congregation. The rabbi's apartment above the Social Hall was refurbished and much improved; air conditioning was installed in the sanctuary; and the exterior of the synagogue was "sided."

The membership of the summer community grew significantly. Many summer residents, members of the congregation, built or bought homes in Tannersville. Since the early 1980's, an early Shabbat service, Hashkama, is held in the sanctuary every Saturday. It attracts as many members as the "later" or regular 9 a.m. service. Rabbi Hershel Schachter, the Rosh Kollel of the Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Rabbinical Seminary of Yeshiva University, conducts a weekly Shiur in the Social Hall following the Hashkama service. When Rabbi Schachter was away in Israel for two summers, Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe and Rosh Yehiva of Yeshivat Darkei Noam of Brooklyn, continued the Halacha Shiur. Rabbi Horowitz has also conducted shiurim on other occasions and is, by now, established as a Torah resource in the community. The Shabbat morning Halacha Shiur, like the daily Daf Yomi Shiur, are entrenched traditions which are much appreciated and needed in the community.

Many illustrious rabbis, too many to describe in detail in this brief history, have graced and influenced the Jewish community of Tannersville. Some of them spent many summers in our midst. Rabbi Moshe Steinberg זצ"ל, the Rav of Brody in Poland before World War II, provided an image of a "Rabbi from the old home." A leading "Posek," he graciously dispensed halachic decisions when consulted by an individual or by the community. Rabbi Steinberg, a kindly gentleman of imposing appearance, served as a positive influence by his mere presence.

Rabbi Israel Stein זצ"ל, the well-known Foltichaner Rav who came a few years later, was a world-class orator who served as the spokesman for the Satmarer community in his prime. The mutual respect and friendship between

Rav Stein זצ"ל and Rav Breuer זצ"ל was edifying to behold. Only true חכמים, תלמידי חכמים, and צדיקים can attain such a lofty attachment of spirits.

After Rav Breuer's petira, Rav Stein, wrapped in his Talit, delivered a heart-rending hour-long eulogy in the Tannersville synagogue. He appealed to the soul of his friend and צדיק, Rav Breuer זצ"ל, not to forget the community he left behind. Rav Stein pleaded for Rav Breuer's intercession before the Divine Throne of Glory to hasten our redemption. Many of those present wept along with Rav Stein. In 1984 Rabbi Abraham Drizin זצ"ל joined his daughter Leah and his son-in-law Yaakov Rubin, our current co-President, and began spending summers in Tannersville. One could not have guessed that this frail, small-statured individual who exuded true humility, had been a one-man army, successfully opposing Stalinist, anti-religious oppression, until his escape from the Soviet Union after World War II. Among Lubavitcher Chassidim he was known affectionately as "Reb Avrohomale Mayor." His life, from the days of his service as the right hand man of Rav Marshab זצ"ל, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, to his last days in Crown Heights, is a story of sacrifice and service. Those of us who were privileged to hear of his exploits for Yiddishkeit and his words of wisdom were enriched by the experience. Rabbi Drizin's sons joined their father and became part of the established summer community.

A "SEFER" IS PRINTED IN TANNERSVILLE

In the summer of 1984, this writer in his capacity as synagogue librarian, was approached by Mr. Nachum Pinson with a request to print the famous Hassidic classic, known as Tanya, in the Village of Tannersville. As is well known, the Tanya, authored by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, זצוקללה"ה, is one of the opera magna of Hassidism. Although Mr. Pinson and others would have borne the cost of the printing, they very much wanted the congregation as a community to participate in the task. It was the wish of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson ז"ע, זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ, that the Tanya be printed in as many Jewish communities as possible.

The president and the Board agreed to sponsor the printing. They added funds to the meager budget of the librarian who, together with the Pinson and Rubin families, arranged for the printing to take place on the grounds of the congregation. A truck, equipped with a printing press arrived. When the bound copies of the Tanya arrived the following summer, the librarian sold copies at \$5 apiece and used the proceeds to expand the Hassidic and Responsa sections of the library.

When the Belzer Rebbe, Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach שליט"א of Jerusalem spent a weekend in Tannersville, the librarian presented him with a copy of the Tanya, the only Hebrew book ever printed in Tannersville, as a souvenir of his visit. It is worth mentioning that the Belzer Rebbe's visit to Tannersville is a typical example of the harmonious atmosphere that prevails in the Jewish community of Tannersville. Mr. Sholom Ber Drizin, a scion of many generations of Lubavitcher Chassidim, vacated his spacious home to allow the Belzer Rebbe and his entourage to conduct services and have a "Tisch." The Belzer Rebbe – wishing to daven in his Nusach Sfar, and out of respect for the Nusach Ashkenaz of our congregation – held services in the Drizin house. However, the Rebbe came into the synagogue in the morning to recite Birchas Hatorah.

T H E C O - P R E S I D E N C Y A N D T H E P R E S E N T

After Mr. Hanfling stepped down from the presidency in 1987, the members elected Jerry Bechhofer and Yaakov Rubin Co-Presidents of the congregation. The co-presidency has been retained to the present time. It represents a leadership that is both traditional and innovative.

The congregation retains many of the customs/programs which have become established traditions, while instituting innovations to meet the needs of our current membership.

The 5 o'clock Shabbat Shiur for the Ladies was given by Mr. Marc Breuer for many years. He then alternated with Dr. Elliott Bondi for a number of years. More recently, the Sisterhood has been inviting different speakers for every Shabbat.

Rav Breuer's custom of conducting the Shabbat Mincha service 10 minutes after שקיעה (sunset), is still observed. Most of the members, however, participate in the two earlier Mincha services, which have been established since 1980. Six years ago, Mr. Henry Moskowitz organized a communal סעודה שלישית in the Social Hall.

For two years, Yehuda Leib Braun, a member of the congregation, organized a "Yarchei Kallah" as an inspiring weekend of Shiurim, group learning, and communal meals. It was supported by the membership and will most likely be renewed in the future.

Charitable fund raising has been increasingly successful. For more than 60 years, an annual appeal for Ezras Torah and HIAS has been supported by all the members as a communal commitment.

From the mid 1950s to the present, the minutes of the congregation show that from time to time groups of individuals wished to conduct services in Nusach Sfar on the premises of Anshei Hashoron. However, the Board of Trustees have repeatedly decided to restrict the congregation to its long established Nusach Ashkenaz. The maintenance of this form of services in the congregation is by now an accepted and well established tradition.

Beginning in the late 1970s and the early 1980s Lubavitcher Chassidim began spending summers in Tannersville. By the late 1980s the Lubavitch

community, who pray in the well-known "Nusach Ari" founded a Chabad Minyan in Tannersville. Currently, they rent a house opposite the synagogue on Tompkins Street.

Rabbi Labkowski, a distinguished Lubavitch rabbi, built a men's Mikveh in his house on Spring Street. His wife, Mrs. Sara Labkowski, runs the Machon Chana program for women during the summer in Tannersville. The Lubavitch community have also organized a Mountain Top "Renaissance Fair" with kosher food sales, music, and various "Mitzva stalls" to promote קירוב רחוקים.

For some, the presence of an additional Minyan in Tannersville represents an unfamiliar change after so many years of having had only one synagogue serving the varied sectors of the Jewish Community in Tannersville. In the final analysis we are one community even as we pray in different "Nus'chaot". Those who daven in the Lubavitch Minyan and those who daven in Anshei Hashoron participated financially in building the new Mikveh. We all join in celebrating the Centennial of Anshei Hashoron of which we are all a part.

The most recent development during the Bechhofer-Rubin co-presidency has been the election of a younger Board of Directors. While retaining the "old timers" as members, the Board of Trustees now includes a younger group representing our future. Mark Bienstock was elected Secretary-Treasurer and has brought us into the computer age in less than one year. Looking at the younger crew assuming positions of leadership and responsibility is very reassuring. These are good reasons to believe that the Jewish summer community of Tannersville will continue to be a vibrant, committed, and caring community. Its prospect for another century of survival is probably better than ever.

C O N C L U S I O N

Since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh and our exile from Jerusalem, the Beis Hamidrash and the Beis Haknesses have sustained us in every corner of the diaspora. These two institutions have been portable homelands that enabled us to remain a nation with our own language, culture, and country. We may have been oppressed outside, but inside our Batei K'neisiyos and Batei Midrashos we were free. We had our true princes, our masters and our law givers. Within the walls of these "small sanctuaries" we found the strength and the courage to face a hostile world as we waited and prayed for our redemption and the Kingdom of Heaven. It was for these reasons that we spared no effort and no expense to build, support, and nurture our Batei K'neisiyos and Batei Midrashos. We instinctively knew that we get more from them than we give to them. However, some of these sanctuaries, due to geographic location, historical period, or other causes, are at times very vulnerable.

One hundred year old synagogues and Batei Midrashos, like elderly people, are extraordinarily fragile and in need of support, especially if their members are one hundred and twenty miles or more away, for most of the year. Nevertheless, the fact that these "Mikdashot" survive and function as vital centers of a community, even for two or three months of the year, reveals a strength which no individual can ever hope to possess. By supporting and giving to these "Mikdashot," one receives in return the power and the spirit which sustain them. It is truly a privilege, for which one must be grateful, to have the opportunity to support and nurture our beloved Anshei Hashoron as it begins its second century. Our splendid new Mikveh is a symbol of the community's unity and commitment to its future.

ויחי נועם ה אלקינו עלינו
ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו
ומעשה ידינו כוננהו

"And let the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us and establish Thou upon us the work of our hands, and the work of our hands establish Thou" (Ps. 90:17).

For we well know that (Ps.127:1)

"אם ה' לא יבנה בית

שוא עמלו בוניו בו

אם ה' לא ישמר עיר

שוא שקד שומר"

"Except the Lord build the house, They labor in vain that build it.
Except the Lord keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain"

Jacob L. Halberstam

July 14, 1999

ר"ח מנחם אב תשנ"ט

R E F E R E N C E S

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A P P E N D I X A

The Founding of Anshei Hashoron

According to Schwarzbach's account (1974) "...in 1904, after fund raising by Mr. Elias Solomon and Mrs. Solomon Schechter, they began to build a synagogue just opposite the present Colonial Coal Yard. This synagogue served the hotels strung out along the high road, both east and west of town, and on the road to Elka Park. According to legend it was a "German-American" congregation where students of the recently founded Jewish Theological Seminary officiated. This is entirely credible for several reasons, despite the fact that the entirely conservative Honigsbaums were among its founders: the synagogue was rather far from town and further from most of the hotels so worshipers probably traveled to synagogue, the vacationing New Yorkers were likely to have been more liberal in their religious views than the relatively recent Russian and Polish immigrants and, finally, Solomon Schechter and Alexander Marx summered here. Rabbi Elias Solomon, one of the most distinguished of the New York conservative rabbis, bought a house on Onteora Park where his family still lives."

Similarly, Evers (1972) writes about the organization of Anshi Hashoran, as follows (p.661):

By the beginning of the twentieth century so many German Jews were enjoying summer life in Tannersville that they were able to organize reformed Congregation Anshi Hashoran, and before long they built a clapboard-and-shingled synagogue, the first to rise in the region since the ill-fated Sholam venture of 1837. Before many years American-born Jews of German background with their relaxed attitude toward religion were greatly outnumbered in Tannersville by newer Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe who clung to strict religious observances. The synagogue passed into the control and ownership of the stricter sect."

Footnote 5 on p. 774 reads: "I am indebted to Joseph Warm of Tannersville, a member of Congregation Anshi Hashoran, for this information."

From facts to theory:

Both the Schwarzbach (1974) and the Evers (1972) descriptions of the founding of Anshei Hashoran need to be critically examined, since they have appeared in print and have a somewhat authoritative ring to them. Additionally, in two recent publications, Schwarzbach's account has been quoted as an authoritative and accurate source. Both seem to convey the idea that Anshei Hashoran began as a "reformed", or at least "conservative" synagogue.

Mr. Eli Resnikoff and this chronicler carefully searched the congregation's records and jointly and separately questioned a number of "older" Tannersville residents, following the publication of Schwarzbach's pamphlet in 1974. This writer specially questioned Mr. Joseph Warm at length about his memory/knowledge of any connection between the congregation and either the Jewish Theological Seminary in general or Rabbi Solomon Schechter in particular. There are no records in the congregation showing that "Mr. Elias Solomon and Mrs. Solomon Schechter raised funds for the congregation." None of the people interviewed remembers ever hearing of any such fund raising. The purported "legend" that it "... was a *"German-American congregation where students of the recently founded Jewish Theological Seminary officiated..."* was unknown to all the people this chronicler questioned after the 1974 publication. Even the author, Dr. Schwarzbach, when questioned by this writer, could not point to any reliable source for this "legend" other than to say "I heard it." The statement that "worshippers probably traveled to the synagogue" because of hotel distances from the synagogue, is particularly gratuitous. Solomon Schechter may or may not have worshiped at Anshei Hashoron. There are no records or specific recollections either way but, it is well known that Rabbi Solomon Schechter never traveled on the Sabbath. We do have evidence that Solomon Schechter was in Tannersville at various times. Thus *Judaism* (Spring 1996, Issue #178, Volume 45 No. 2) reproduced a photograph of Solomon Schechter together with Judah L. Magnes, Louis Ginzberg and Samson Benderly and six other unidentified men taken in 1907. This picture was taken at the time of the tenth annual convention of the American Zionists in Tannersville.

More recently, the highly esteemed Vice President of Congregation Anshei Hashoron, Mr. Julius Warm, the brother of the late Joseph Warm, told this writer that he clearly recalled being told by his brother Joseph that the congregation had always been an Orthodox institution. In fact the Board of Trustees adopted the position that as long as a single member wanted the congregation to remain Orthodox, the Orthodox tradition of the congregation could not be changed.

The Alf Evers (1972, p.661) account of the founding of the congregation, which he attributed to Joseph Warm, is most likely an innocent misinterpretation of what Joseph Warm told him. Evers most likely interpreted Joseph Warm's information concerning a shift in the membership from predominantly German Jews to Eastern European Jews as a shift from liberal reform Judaism to the "stricter sect." Evers certainly didn't hear about the

organization of a "reformed congregation Anshi Hashoron" from Joseph Warm. Reform Judaism, introduced to the US by Reform Rabbi Isaac Meir Weiss in the second half of the 19th century, had not spread beyond the major centers of Jewish (mostly German-Jewish) concentration in some of the major cities in the US by 1899. A "reformed" congregation in Tannersville in 1899 is an obvious anachronism. Coming from a non-Jewish writer who was dealing with the broad movements from the Wilderness to Woodstock in the Catskills, an inaccurate detail concerning one congregation in one small village is most likely an innocent oversight. This chronicler questioned many "old timers" who had been in Tannersville, about the kind of services conducted at Anshei Hashoron. None of the respondents, including Joseph Warm, remembered any deviation from the traditional "Nusach Ashkenaz." Joseph Warm did recall a few instances when "Hasidim" were in attendance, and some of them tried to "daven differently," though he did not recall what exactly the difference was. Unfortunately, this writer cannot recall whether Joseph Warm dated the "Hasidim" episode to the late 1930s or early 1940s, or even later.

