MEMORIES

AT

EIGHTY-FIVE

A. B. COHEN

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A. B. COHEN, SCRANTON, PA.

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II

I dedicate this book to the many wonderful people in Scranton and Lackawanna County, without whose help and co-operation I could have accomplished very little during my lifetime.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Simon H. Shoop, the beloved Rabbi of Temple Israel, Scranton, and to Attorney Emanuel Laster for the assistance which they rendered me in the preparation of my autobiography and the time and effort which they devoted in confirming certain facts, which added a great deal to the sincerity of my story.

I cannot express in words my indebtedness to my beloved son-in-law, E. Lester Man, for the many hours he devoted to correcting the manuscript where necessary, the reading of the proofs, and the setting up of the book with the Obrana Press.

I wish to thank my business associate, Mr. Eli Albert, for his understanding of the many hours of business time which I have devoted to this work. And to my secretary, Florence Kane, for services far above and beyond the call of duty in assisting me on the manuscript, my sincerest thanks.

There is an old saying by our Rabbis "The great deeds are always credited to the person who finishes the work."

Finally, my unbounded appreciation goes to Mr. M. L. Hodin who, together with Dr. Shoop, obtained the sponsors of this book, whose generosity made its publication possible. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

A. B. COHEN

FOREWORD

Many cities bear the names of their founders or earliest settlers and these names are perpetuated as long as the cities exist. Yet, these very cities are frequently blessed with unique individuals who, by virtue of their ingenuity, and devoted interest, make contributions to the welfare of the community, which make it a greater city and a better place in which to live. Scranton is one of these cities and one of the unique individuals who contributed so greatly to its improvement is A. B. Cohen, a man who can be referred to truly as a "Townsman" and who, at an age when others have gone into retirement, continues to introduce innovations for communal betterment.

A synthesis of the ancient wisdom of Hebraic culture, the experiences and developments of European life, more than a half century of American evolution, this is A. B. Cohen. Only a brilliant mind could have absorbed so many of the great teachings of the Sages, only a greatly retentive memory could have maintained so many indelible impressions throughout the decades, and only an originally inspired person could could have diverted all of these great thoughts into new channels, applying them to the thoughts, experiences and deeds of the day and making them live anew in the lives of men.

Abraham B. Cohen, wrapped in a prayer shawl, started his Hebraic studies in Birzai, Lithuania, and for the past 80 years the spark, then ignited, has warmed the hearts of countless persons. His was and is a restless mind, never satisfied with the commonplace, always seeking progress and dynamic change. It is not surprising therefore that the campaign for the Bookmobile and the Fire Department Ambulances were inspired and led to victory by A. B. Cohen who at the age of 10 conducted his first campaign in the town of his birth to provide his synagogue with new and better lighting fixtures. Longfellow said:

"The heights by great men reached and kept
were not attained by sudden flight,
But they while their companions slept
Were toiling onward in the night."

Those who know "A.B." realize that he toils while others sleep. The early morning telephone calls to friends indicate that an idea was born during the night and a plan for its implementation developed before daybreak. The pad and pencil which are his constant companions reflect his activities which commence in the early morn and end at midnight.

The Sages of Israel recommended, "Shamoneh Esreh Lechupah"—"The age of 18 for marriage." "A.B." became a groom at 18 in accordance with the rabbinical prescription and thus had to leave his place of birth to seek a livelihood.

It was in 1892 that 18-year-old A. B. Cohen left his native Lithuania and came to the United States. Two years later he settled in Scranton. The next 61 years of his life are best summed up, perhaps, by an excerpt from the citation read by the Very Rev. John J. Long, S.J., President of the University of Scranton, when he awarded Mr. Cohen an honorary Doctor of Laws.

". . . the years that followed are illuminated with his zealous and public-spirited work as a leader in establishing recreational centers for children of all faiths, in the collection of funds for the relief of soldiers and the needy during two World Wars and the economic crisis which separated them; in the organization and leadership of the present Scranton Committee on Labor and Management . . . and in his unflagging zeal in helping to provide clinics for the diagnosis of heart disease and ambulance service for the stricken. . . .

"He (Mr. Cohen) merits the distinction of being a living example of the two greatest laws from which are founded and from which are drawn all our freedoms: the law of the Love of God above all, and the law of the love of a neighbor for the Love of God. . . ."

To gain further insight into the life of A. B. Cohen, the man and civic leader, let us go back to April 19, 1950 when

he was cited by the Scranton Chamber of Commerce for his work as Chairman of the City's Labor-Management Committee.

On that occasion, the Rev. J. Eugene Gallery told Mr. Cohen that, "We want you to know that we are proud of having you as one of our outstanding and loyal citizens. . . .

"Scranton is a better place to live because of the social insight of A. B. Cohen and other civic leaders like him."

Mr. Cohen believes deeply that every American has a debt to his community and his neighbors for being given the privilege of enjoying the opportunity and freedoms that our country affords. He seeks no personal return for his efforts —except that satisfaction forthcoming to those who lend a helping hand to others.

Within a year after Mr. Cohen's arrival in Scranton, he founded a school for the instruction of Hebrew youth which served as a model for similar schools throughout the country. Here, in this admirable endeavor, he put into action a strongly-held belief, that the crystallization of American Jewish life should be accelerated. Similarly, he gave breadth and scope to his vision of an organized American Jewry, alive to the conditions of modern life and yet true to the spiritual values which the past had bequeathed to it.

In the years that followed, Mr. Cohen led in the establishment of every important Jewish institution in the community, including the organization of several synagogues.

As dedicated as he was to the progress of the Jewish community, A. B. Cohen never forgot that he was a member of an even larger group. Here is another quality that has endeared him to all. The Scranton Times puts it this way:

"A. B. Cohen never for a moment lived in a physical or mental ghetto. He quickly absorbed the spirit of American life and in the midst of his preoccupation with the growing pains of the Jewish community, he focused his mind on the needs of the general community."

Mr. Cohen's first major civic contribution was made in

1907 when he helped to organize the first public playground in Scranton. His interest in open air facilities for Recreation and Play led to the chairmanship of the city's recreation committee.

Down through the years Mr. Cohen played a prominent role in the Scranton Community Chest, Chamber of Commerce, and Heart Fund; he organized the drive for consumer pledges during NRA days; he put his fund-raising genius to work in many local campaigns, including those for a heart clinic at Hahnemann Hospital and a Fire Department ambulance.

Perhaps his crowning civic achievement was the leadership he gave to the Scranton Good Will Committee—a group organized to promote and maintain industrial harmony in the region. The Scranton Tribune editorialized that his work in averting strikes and settling industrial disputes is "legendary and, as a result, the city has earned for itself an enviable reputation in labor as well as manufacturing circles."

"Certainly, there is no civic activity that gratifies Mr. Cohen more than the Good Will Committee. Through this project, he is able to help his neighbors understand each other better and to help break down any sham barriers that might tend to divide them.

He has been instrumental in bringing about an enviable atmosphere of peace and harmony on the Scranton industrial scene. In those few instances, where sagacity and patience were needed to solve local labor-management discord, Mr. Cohen acted as a successful arbiter between conflicting parties."

An interviewer once called Mr. Cohen a "laboratory type of man." What he meant is that Mr. Cohen likes to work out his problems quietly and in his own way. But, above all, he is a great believer in the value of experimentation in both his business and community affairs.

It would be redundant to recite the long and noteworthy list of Mr. Cohen's religious and civic achievements. But a capsulized account of his good citizenship does much to show

how well he has put his personal credo of service into action. Such a list is appended to this foreword.

America has been good to A. B. Cohen. It brought him security, freedom, and recognition. In his quiet, unassuming way, Mr. Cohen has tried to even the score. That he has more than succeeded will be evident to the readers of his autobiography.

Dr. Simon H. Shoop, Rabbi,
Emanuel Laster

July, 1958.

July 2, 1958

Mr. Nat E. Levy, President
Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council
Scranton National Bank Building
Scranton, Penna.

Dear Mr. Levy:

The biography of an elder statesman, which makes available to future generations the scope and motivation of the innumerable events in which he played an important part, is always a source of interest, not only to those who have lived through, and with him, those events, but also to those who draw inspiration and guidance from the manner in which such events have been shaped and directed. The history of the Scranton Jewish Community and of the Scranton community at large has been so intertwined with the life of A. B. Cohen that it is indeed fortunate for all of us to have this history recorded by so authoritative a source and so direct a participant. I am able to testify personally to the fact that during my own nearly half century in the City of Scranton there has been virtually no worthwhile activity in which A. B. Cohen was not an active worker and supporter. He has handled with grace and dignity community tasks both great and small and has left his lasting impression upon the Scranton community of which he remains, and we pray will remain for many years to come, an honored and revered member. His name and reputation have gone forth beyond the confines of this city and his activities on the national Jewish scene have also been fruitful and have reflected credit and shed glory on our city.

But over and above his substantial contributions to the welfare of our community, I should like to note my personal pride in counting him as a true and loyal friend and as a companion in arms in all of the great struggles for the advancement and betterment of Jewish life in this city, in which I have been privileged to work and labor at his side.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi H. Guterman,

CAREER OF

A. B. COHEN

SCRANTON, Pa.

Born in Birzai, Lithuania, on September 4, 1873.

Son of Reuben and Frumi Hinda Cohen. His father spent his lifetime in Lithuania and died in 1895. His mother came to America and spent the remainder of her life in Brooklyn. She died in 1917.

Educated at the Lithuania Talmudical Academy.

In 1892 he married Ella Wittert (now deceased). Remarried to Dora Benyas.

Three children were born to Mr. Cohen: Celia, married to E. Lester Man; Eva, married to George Glaser; and Arthur Reuben married to Jean Collins. Mr. Cohen has six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Came to the United States in 1892 and was naturalized in 1900.

ACTIVITIES

Arrived in Scranton in 1894.

Engaged in manufacturing jewelry.

In 1895 organized the Montefiore Hebrew School, one of the first modern Hebrew schools in the country. Was President of this organization for 17 years.

Attended the first Zionist Federation convention (Z.O.A.) in 1897.

In 1900 headed a small group who acquired the Linden Street Temple from the Reformed Congregation. Took title in his name as Trustee for the proposed orthodox organization.

In 1901 organized the Kneseth Israel Congregation, a modern orthodox congregation.

In 1906, with a small group, consisting of Ralph Weeks, President of the International Correspondence Schools, Mr. Hagen and Mr. Jackson, executive director of the Y.M.C.A. organized the first playground to demonstrate the need of same.

Served as Chairman of the Recreation Commission under three Mayors, under whose supervision seventeen modern-equipped playgrounds, Lake Lincoln, four outdoor swimming pools and three public buildings were built for the benefit of the public.

Induced the late C. S. Weston to donate $150,000 for Weston Park as a recreation center.

In 1907 induced Mayor Dimmick to appoint a committee to raise sufficient funds to build an artificial lake, now known as Lake Lincoln. Mr. Cohen was assigned to prepare plans to raise $11,500 for the project.

In 1913, conducted a successful campaign to raise funds to build a home for the Y.M.H.A. Raised $53,000 in eleven days.

In 1914 entered the general insurance business. Now General Agent for the Continental Assurance Company of Chicago, Illinois.

In 1914 succeeded in combining nine Jewish charity organizations in Scranton into the present Jewish Federation (The Jewish Family Service Agency).

During World War I served as Chairman of the local National Jewish Welfare Board Army and Navy Committee.

Directed all campaigns for local and national organizations, including U.P.A. and U.J.A. from 1918 to 1942.

In 1917, served as vice-president of the United War Drive composed of the Y.M.C.A., Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, and Jewish Welfare Board to raise $700,000 and conduct the campaign to raise the amount.

In 1922, together with a small group organized Temple Israel, the outstanding conservative congregation in Northeastern Pennsylvania and formulated a plan to raise $340,000.

In 1923 succeeded in freeing Kneseth Israel Congregation from indebtedness.

Was elected a delegate at large to attend the 14th Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1925.

In 1925, traveled Lithuania for the American-Jewish Congress making a survey of the Jewish situation.

In 1926, raised the unprecedented amount of $165,000.00 for a combined palestine Joint Distribution Fund.

In 1933, appointed by President Roosevelt as Adjutant General for the purpose of organizing a drive for consumers pledges to patronize the Blue Eagle, and supervise minimum hours and maximum pay, under the NRA.

In 1933, organized and acted as Chairman of the Scranton Good Will Committee (now Labor and Management), "to advance the economic interests of Scranton by promoting and maintaining industrial harmony." Two hundred and fifty labor disputes were successfully settled, a saving to the community of millions of dollars in payrolls, from 1933 to 1949.

In 1945, organized the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Council, where all local Jewish activities are being directed, including the annual drive for U.J.A. and other National organizations. Served as its first President.

In 1947, conducted drive for City ambulance and fire equipment.

Former Chairman of the Board of Assessors under two mayors.

Chairman of the new Hebrew School Building Committee of Temple Israel, Scranton.

Life member of the Zionist Organization of America.

Life member of the Theodore Wint Veterans' Home.

Honorary President of the Scranton Zionist Organization.

Honorary President of the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Council.

Honorary life member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Center.

Honorary member of the Board of Directors of the Scranton Jewish Federation.

Chairman, Board of Trustees of "State of Israel Bonds."

Former President of the Eastern Pennsylvania United Synagogues of America.

Member of the Masonic Order.

Former member of the Board of Trustees of the Scranton-Dunmore Community Chest.

Member of the Scranton Lodge of Elks.

Former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Council.

National member of the Board of Directors of the American Jewish Congress.

Corporate member of the American Jewish Committee.

Member of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Pennsylvania District Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds.

Member of the Scranton Historical Society.

Fifty-Year member of the B'nai B'rith.

Member of the Purple Club.

First President of the Zionist District in Scranton.

Former Vice-President of the Scranton Chamber of Commerce.

The City of Scranton Council, passed a resolution congratulating Mr. Cohen on the occasion of his 75th birthday. Community of Jew and Gentile celebrated his birthday as a public function.

Received the Community Center Fellowship Award for outstanding community services.

In 1951, the Chamber of Commerce declared "A. B. Cohen Day" and Father Gallery, President of the University of Scranton, presented him with a Certificate of Merit in recognition of the services rendered to the Community of Scranton.

Devised a system whereby Communities may issue bonds to liquidate their indebtedness on mortgages and loans against their real estate holdings and without increasing their budget in redeeming the bonds when due.

Devised a system of "Automatic Bank Account Deduction Plan" to be used for U.J.A., Israel Bonds and others, where pledges are received and time payments are extended for a year or more. This plan is now being adopted by many communities.

In 1951, Eastern Pennsylvania United Jewish Conference paid tribute to A. B. Cohen as one of Pennsylvania's beloved sons.

In 1952 conducted a campaign to raise funds to organize a Clinic for the Lackawanna County Heart Association whereby people who are in poor circumstances could have electrocardiograms, fluoroscopes and other diagnoses to find out the condition of their hearts. Clinic now functions very successfully. Mr. Cohen was Chairman of the Board and is now Vice-President of the organization.

On his 80th Birthday, the community offered him a purse for a trip to Europe which he declined and asked that they use the money to organize a loan society where needy people could obtain a loan of up to $500.00 without interest or carrying charges. This organization is now known as the A. B. Cohen Hebrew Free Loan Society, and is operating successfully.

In 1954 headed drive which raised $30,000 for purchase of new ambulance and extra fire fighting equipment, which was presented to the City.

In 1955, University of Scranton conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Elected Vice-President of the Lackawanna United Fund, 1957-1958.

In 1957, headed drive to raise funds to establish a Bookmobile to deliver reading material to isolated districts.



THE AUTHOR, 1955



GRANDFATHER REB ZUNDEL

The Patriarch of Poswohel



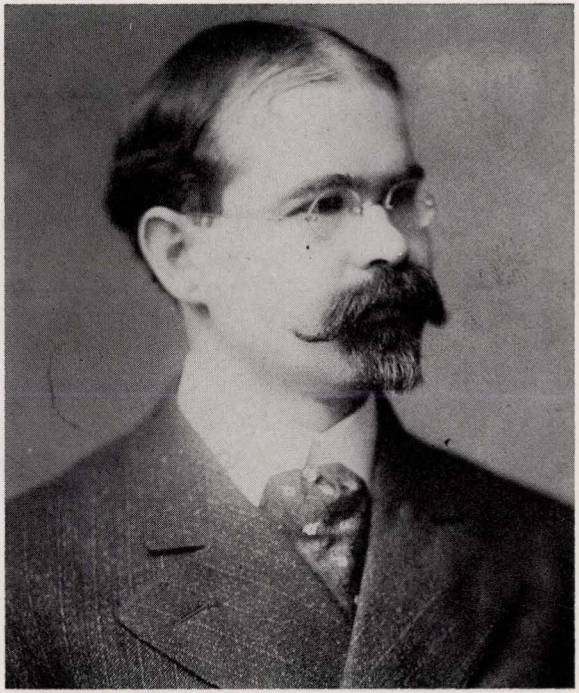
THE YOUNG IMMIGRANT

New York, 1893



WITH FAMILY, ABOUT 1900

Standing: Ella Wittert Cohen, Celia Cohen.
Seated: A. B. Cohen, Arthur R. Cohen, Eva Cohen.



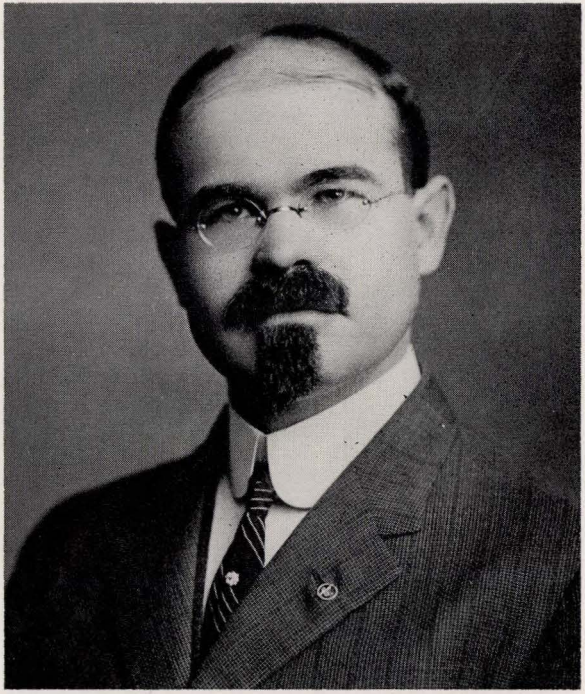
THE CANDIDATE FOR
SCHOOL DIRECTOR
1905



WHEN ENTERING INSURANCE
BUSINESS
1914



ELLA WITTERT COHEN AND
A. B. COHEN
1925



DELEGATE TO WORLD CONGRESS
1925



70TH BIRTHDAY, 1943

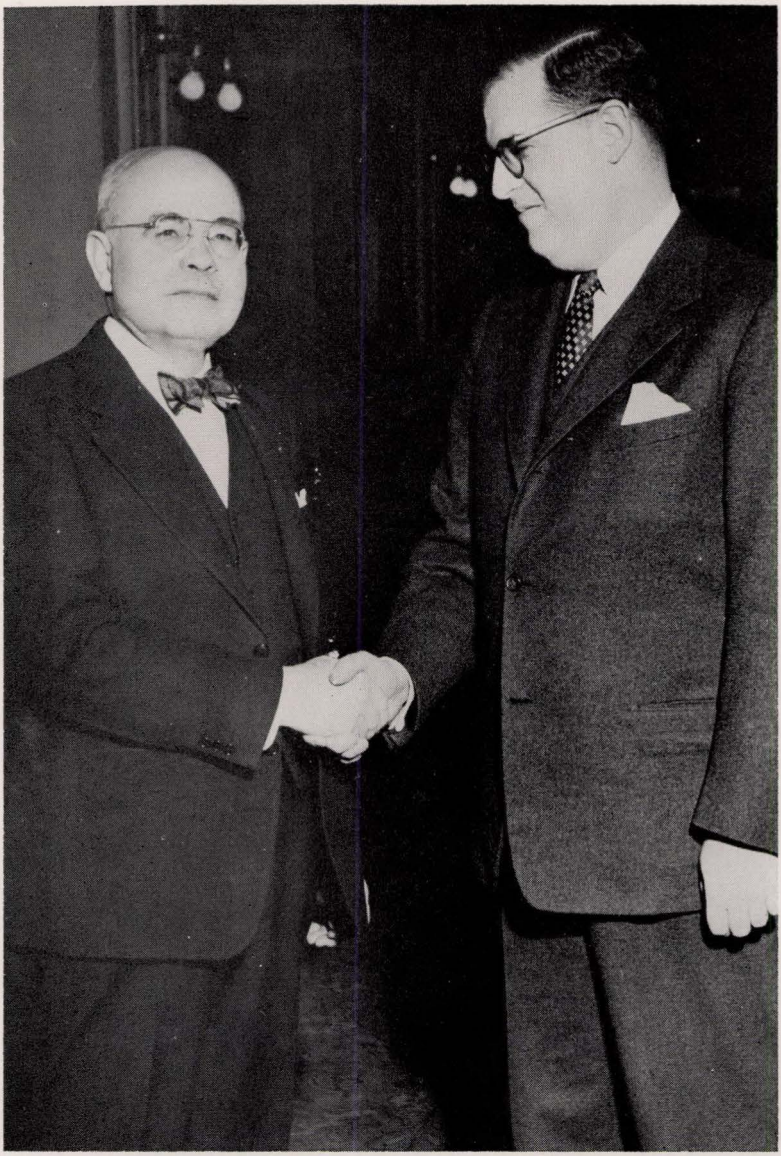
Left to right: bottom row: Mrs. H. Guterman, Rabbi H. Guterman, Mrs. A. B. Cohen, A. B. Cohen, M. L. Goodman, Mrs. Goodman.

Top row, left to right: Rabbi Arthur Buch, Rabbi Max Kirschblum, Rabbi Wolfe Gold, Reverend William



PRESENTATION OF AWARD BY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
A. B. COHEN DAY, 1951

Left to right: A. B. Cohen, Rev. Eugene Gallery, Wm. W. Scranton, Gordon Evans.



WITH ISRAEL AMBASSADOR ABBA EBEN

1953



A. B. COHEN AND DORA BENYAS COHEN

1953



UNITED JEWISH APPEAL MEETING, 1953

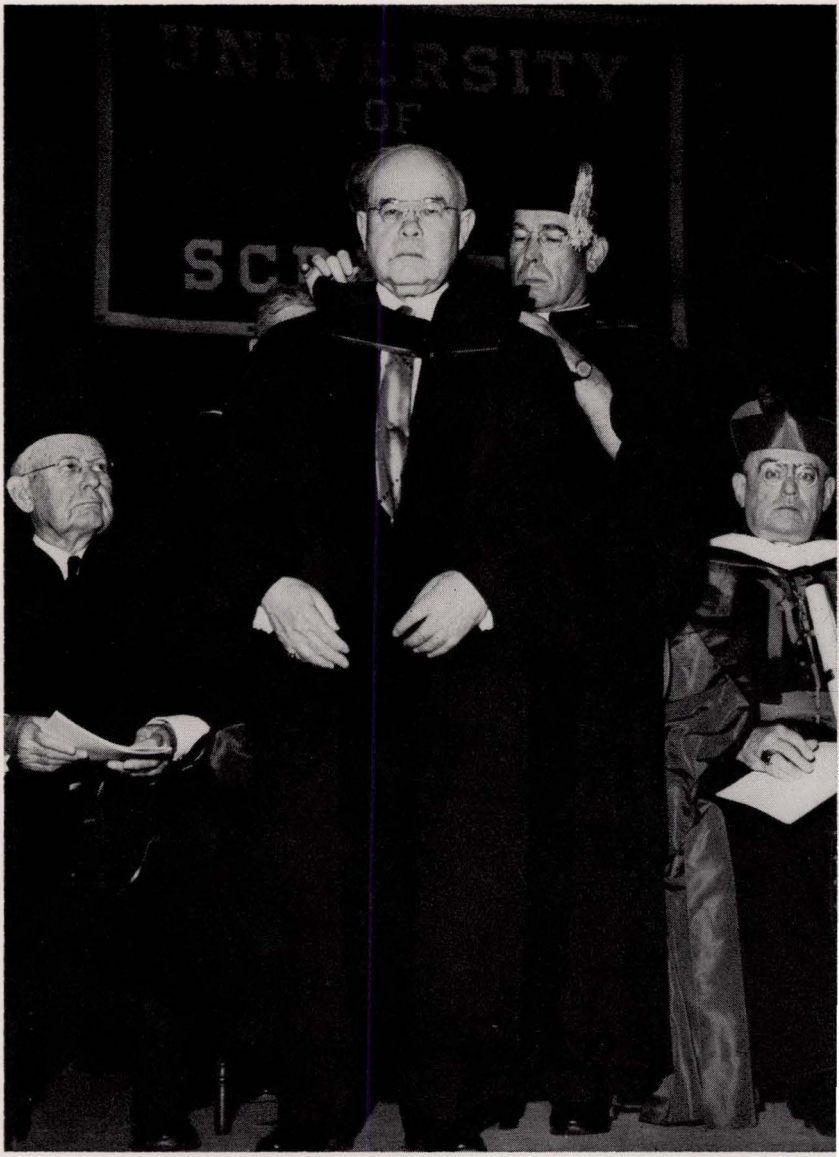
Left to right: Rabbi Guterman, Morris Gelb, Henry Morganthau, Jr., A. B. Cohen.



80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION, 1953

Left to right, bottom row: Mr. Louis Lipsky, Mrs. A. B. Cohen, A. B. Cohen, Rabbi Shoop, Mrs. Shoop, Mrs. S. Mittleman.

Left to right, top row: Harry Dickstein, Mrs. Dickstein, Mrs. M. J. Eagen, Judge M. J. Eagen, Sam Mittleman, Mayor James T. Hanlon, Rabbi Max Kirschblum.



CONFERRING OF DOCTORATE, 1955

Left to right: Judge Albert L. Watson, A. B. Cohen, Most Rev. John J. Long, S.J., President, University of Scranton, Bishop Jerome D. Hannan, D.D.

THE PRESIDENT AND PROFESSORS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON
TO ALL THOSE TO WHOSE KNOWLEDGE THESE LETTERS MAY COME
GREETINGS

The true exemplar of the brave men who, as pioneers, came to the primeval wilderness of the New World, founded and established this republic which is our fatherland, is not merely the man who, with adventurous spirit, left his homeland to seek a greater freedom and a larger prosperity on new shores; but rather he who, having established himself as a citizen of the republic, devoted himself wholeheartedly to the assistance of others in his new home and in other lands, sharing with them the fruit of his toil and experience. Such a man is the distinguished leader whom we in this community know and love as Abraham B. Cohen.

An immigrant from his native Lithuania at the age of nineteen, he came to these United States of America in the year 1892 and two years later settled in this city of Scranton. Within a year of his advent in Scranton, he had founded a school for the instruction of Hebrew youth which served as a model for similar schools throughout the nation; and the years that followed are illuminated with his zealous and public-spirited work as a leader in establishing recreational centers for children of all faiths, in the collection of funds for the relief of the soldiers and the needy during two world wars and the economic crisis which separated them; in the organization and leadership of the present Scranton Committee on Labor and Management by the good offices of which over 250 disputes have been settled since 1933; and in his unflagging zeal in helping to provide clinics for the diagnosis of heart diseases and ambulance service for the stricken.

Already he has been honored as pre-eminent among his fellow citizens by the Scranton Chamber of Commerce, by the City Council of Scranton, and by the estimable Jewish community of this city, and well merits the distinction of being a living example of the two greatest laws upon which are founded and from which are drawn all our freedoms; the law of the love of God above all, and the law of the love of neighbor for the love of God; we, therefore, by virtue of the authority granted by the State of Pennsylvania, with pride and genuine affection, create and declare

ABRAHAM B. COHEN
DOCTOR OF LAWS, HONORIS CAUSA

And that this our act may become known to all men, we have affixed our signature to this document, and we have sealed the same with the seal of this University, on this the fifth day of June, in the year of Our Lord, One Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty-five.

JOHN P. MCNICHOLAS, S.J.
Secretary

JOHN J. LONG, S.J.
President



SECOND AMBULANCE PRESENTATION, 1956

Left to right: Arthur Heightman, Gordon Evans, Director Lonsdorf, A. B. Cohen, Robert V. Horger, Mr. Wagner, John O'Connell, Mayor James T. Hanlon.



PRESENTATION OF SERVICE PLAQUE OF HEART ASSOCIATION, 1957

Left to right: Dr. Martin T. O'Malley, dean of Lackawanna Medical Society, Hon. James T. Hanlon, A. B. Cohen, Dr. Albert Cross, president of the Lackawanna Heart Association, Professor Joseph A. Wagner, M.D., professor of Cardiology at the University of Pennsylvania.



BOOKMOBILE DRIVE, 1957

Seated, left to right: Mrs. Charles Fetzer, Mrs. Ruth Smith, Mr. A. B. Cohen, Mrs. Mortimer Fruehan, president of the P.T.A., Mrs. Rose Datto, co-chairman of the Bookmobile Canvas Committee, Mrs. Frank Pron, Mrs. Michael Pehanich.

Standing, left to right: Mr. Harold Brandamore, Mr. Archie Litwhiler, Mrs. Joseph Doherty, Sergeant

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MEMORIES

AT

EIGHTY-FIVE

CHAPTER I

MY PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

I have been asked by many of my friends, including my good friend Rabbi Simon H. Shoop, to write about the Jewish life for the past sixty-three years in Scranton, including my own part which I have played in promoting some of the institutions. In doing so, I thought I could not separate my sixty-three years of activity in Scranton from my eighteen years of life prior to my immigration from Lithuania.

Before commencing to write about myself, I thought it would be proper to write first about my grandparents and also my father and mother whose lives I believe have influenced me and some of whose ideals I have inherited in life.

MY GRANDFATHER ARJA

My father's father, who was named Arja, was considered one of the most interesting persons in Birzai. He was the leader of the Beth-Hamedrash of which he was president for twenty years. He was the *Gabbai* of the *Chevra-Kadisha* (The Holy Society) and I remember that on Shimina Azteras the leaders used to carry him to Shule. He was very optimistic, very liberal and a great philosopher.

According to the laws of Russia and Lithuania, every stranger needed a passport. One Kol Nidre night a policeman called on my grandfather in Shule and said that he was sent by the Chief of Police to tell him that a stranger had been

arrested for not having a passport. The Chief of Police would not object if anybody would furnish bail in order to have the stranger released so that he could attend Kol Nidre services.

My grandfather asked the Rabbi to postpone Kol Nidre and he went immediately to Police Headquarters to furnish bail for the stranger; it wasn't long before he came back to Beth-Hamedrash with him.

Not knowing the background of the stranger he treated him with all the honors due to a man who was honest, since not having a passport in those days was not considered a moral crime. After the Services my grandfather Arja took the stranger along with him and in the morning he again took him to the Beth-Hamedrash.

My grandfather, being the leader of the Beth-Hamedrash, used to distribute the honors in calling the worshippers to the Torah. Of course, they generally contributed towards the Beth-Hamedrash for the honors bestowed upon them. My grandfather thought that the stranger was probably accustomed to being called to the Torah on Yom Kippur and therefore called him without asking for a contribution.

When the day was over, we all went home to break the fast. The stranger came with us and the evening was spent with a group of friends who called upon my grandfather. The stranger participated in the general conversation. About twelve o'clock we all retired and the stranger was assigned to my grandfather's library, which was also used as his office. In the morning when the servants awakened they found that the stranger was gone—and so were 635 rubles. The neighbors found out what had happened and felt very badly about it. It was their idea that inasmuch as there was no way for the stranger to leave town except by foot, they would get a group on horseback, pursue the stranger and catch up with him. However, my grandfather said, "If this man could do such a thing, after being befriended and shown courtesy and kindness and having enough confidence placed in him so that he slept in the library with all the valuables, he must be very badly off and probably needs the money more than I do." He therefore asked the neighbors not to chase the stranger. I consider this a wonderful gesture and a liberal action.

I do not know the actual wealth of my grandfather Arja as in those days there was no such thing as a rating. He, with his son Reuben, had a tannery and a small wholesale and retail leather accessory shop. However, I do know that he lived in a fine home, always had two servants and on many occasions would entertain a number of friends at his table. He died on the fifteenth day of Shevat in 1892 at the age of 76.

A few days before he died he remarked, "It is mentioned in the Torah in the passage of the blessing and cursing which reads, 'The stranger that is in thy midst shall mount up above thee higher and higher and thou shalt come down lower and lower.' I was always wondering why the words higher and higher and lower and lower were duplicated. My interpretation is that the unknown person in the community who would reach his height quickly would probably not enjoy great wealth as people would be wondering how the man became so rich all of a sudden, but if he reached his height little by little then the people would forget all about his past and he would be a happy man. In the curse lower and lower it is the same way. Take my own case; If Arja Sholem would all of a sudden lose all his money, be dispossessed of his home, be compelled to die as a tenant in a small room, this would be 'low.' People would remember his past and therefore it would make a great impression upon them. But, if everything was slowly going 'lower and lower', first losing wealth, then losing home and being dispossessed, getting sick and dying in a small room, that is 'lower and lower.' Nobody, I suppose, cares what happens to Arja."

However, he was mistaken. His death created a great commotion in the town and he was mourned and eulogized by the entire community.

MY GRANDFATHER REB ZUNDEL

Reb Zundel was the father of my mother. He lived all his lifetime in Poswohel. He was ordained as a Rabbi at a very young age, but, for reasons of his own, he did not wish to occupy a rabbinical position and looked for a livelihood in

other occupations. However, the Rabbi of Poswohel suggested to him that he act as a *Dayon* whose duties would be to make peace between persons having disputes and he accepted this offer. There was a vacancy for the position of *Shochet* and he was induced to take the profession also. He did not wish to be called Rabbi so he was called Reb Zundel.

A story was told that once two men called on him to straighten out some difficulty which existed between them. After listening to both he made a suggestion that they should step into one of the side rooms and try to settle their difference between themselves. A little while later both of them came in, happy and smiling, and said to him, "Reb Zundel we have settled this ourselves. How would you have settled our difficulty?"

My grandfather said, "When the *Dayon* has to give his verdict the Wisdom of God is with him to give the right one, but inasmuch as you have settled amongst yourselves, I cannot ask the Almighty to give me Wisdom in rendering a decision."

It was a custom that he would officiate at Neilah Services on Yom Kippur and many times when it was very dark and lights were dim, he was able to recite from memory.

His picture hangs in my library and he looks like a great patriarch. He lived to a very old age; some of his children claim that he was in his late nineties and some claim that he reached over a hundred. Bless his memory.

MY FATHER

My father's name was Reuben, the son of Arja. He was in the tannery business with his father and they also conducted a small wholesale and retail leather accessory shop, as I mentioned before. The business was divided in this manner—my grandfather Arja took care of the tannery and my father was in charge of the leather store. It was my grandfather Arja's wish that my father should spend a great deal of time in studying the Talmud.

My father was a very religious man and was considered a real *Tzadik* as well as a great authority on the Talmud and

other Hebrew literature. He was a practical *Mohel* and whenever he was called to the *Brith* of a poor family he always provided the refreshments himself. As a Cohen he was called many times to a *pidyen haben* and there he also provided the refreshments whenever a family was not in a position to do so themselves.

I can recall that he used to arise at three o'clock in the morning to study the Talmud and other Hebrew literature and my mother, bless her memory, used to get up at the same time to prepare coffee for him.

In later years, when the business with his father did not prove successful enough to support them both he decided to leave it all to his father, and to look for something else. So he moved to Poswohel and engaged himself in preparing young men to enter the Yeshivah.

He died at the early age of 47 and was mourned and eulogized by the greatest people of our community.

MY MOTHER

My mother's name was Frumi Hinda. She was the daughter of Reb Zundel of Poswohel. She was a real saint, very religious and highly educated in Hebrew literature. She could recite any portion of the Bible any time she was called upon. I remember that in the section reserved for women in the Shule she was always surrounded by a crowd interested in her interpretation.

I remember during the berry season she used to prepare large quantities of raspberry jelly to distribute among the poor who could not make it themselves because of the high cost of sugar.

She was a great observer of Yoshen, as according to the Bible you should first use up the old grain before the new crop. Therefore she managed to obtain wheat flour from the millers and the flour was prepared from Yoshen wheat. In order to bake Chalah for Saturdays and holidays from Yoshen yeast, she used to obtain Yoshen barley, brew a light beer and let it ferment into Yoshen yeast. I remember when I was a small boy of six or seven that on Thursdays I had

to deliver Yoshen yeast to some of the other women who were very strict in observing Yoshen.

At the time my father dissolved partnership with his father Arja and left for Poswohel, my mother engaged herself in making raisin wine which was famous in the whole territory.

She was a fine woman and died in Brooklyn in 1917 in her late seventies. Bless her memory.

CHAPTER II

MY EARLY DAYS

According to family records, I was born the 12th day of Elul, September 4, 1873, in Birzai, Lithuania, the son of Reuben and Frumi Hinda. Besides myself, there were three other children, two daughters and one son. The oldest, Pearl Rifka, died in 1897 in Lithuania. My late brother Sholem was considered a *Talmud Chochem.* He studied to be a Rabbi, but when he left Lithuania at 18 years of age, his plans changed. Sholem passed away in 1941, bless his memory. My sister, Sarah Eglow, lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Birzai was a small town of 8,000 of which approximately one-half were Jews, and it was famous for its Talmudic scholars and also for its great leaders in Jewish life.

My childhood to the age of five was average. I remember my father, bless his memory, was a great observer of all Jewish traditions, and one of those was that "when a child reaches age five, this is the time he should start to read." Therefore, when I became five, he wrapped me in a prayer shawl and carried me in his arms to my first teacher who was famous for teaching beginners the Bible and Hebrew prayers. When I reached age seven and and a half I was sent to another teacher who specialized in teaching *Gemorah.*

It is worth detailing the five or six years in the life of a child going to *Cheder.* Generally the *Cheder* was a small room where 12 or 15 boys would gather around a long table

all together. You would find a beginner sitting with a class that had studied two or three years. The time was generally from 8 in the morning to 8 or 9 in the evening for five and a half days of the week (we would only go a half day on Friday). On Saturday, when there was no *Cheder,* Father or a relative would examine us to see what progress was made during the week. So Saturday was a very hard day for a child to overcome.

There were only a few days during the year when the boys would get a vacation—during the High Holidays and also half days for Chanukah and Purim.

During my Hebrew school days, there were three occasions that are indelibly pressed on my mind. I remember when I was nine years old, on the 9th day of Ab which is a fast day for adults, we boys decided we should fast too. But we were afraid to stay home as Mother would compel us to eat. So we decided to take a long walk and we landed in a small village called Lecisak. The innkeeper was a woman by the name of Mrs. Hode. We reached that place a little after four o'clock in the afternoon, very much exhausted from the heat as well as from the long walk and lack of food. Mrs. Hode asked what was wrong with us so we told her we were fasting. She gave us a scolding and told us that children of that age had no right to fast and she put before us fresh bagels and sour cream which were very inviting—so, without much hesitation, we broke our fast. But when we left the inn to go back home, we felt sorry that we hadn't withstood the temptation; the anticipation of fasting all day and the whole family admiring us and waiting upon us and praising our heroic action— all of these things were now in vain. However, we decided not to say anything at home and to pretend that we had fasted. I remember that in the evening when it was time to break the fast, Mother took care of me first, telling the rest of the family that I should be preferred because I was the youngest.

But as luck would have it, Mrs. Hode came to town and she decided to stop at our home and criticize my mother for permitting me to fast. She told her how bad I looked when I reached her inn and how she was thoughtful enough to

give us all bagels and sour cream. Imagine how I felt—I almost choked when everybody in the family started to laugh and give me the "needles." The result of this incident was that, afterward, whenever I did fast, everyone asked me in the evening how the bagels and cream tasted.

There is another incident which is strongly in my memory. Everyone in our town had either a cow or a goat but we didn't have our own land on which to graze them so we were obliged to send them to the fields—for which we had to pay a certain amount during the summer. The fields were owned collectively by the peasants and land owners, and although it appeared that they didn't know how to collect money, they had a unique system. On a bright day when all the cows and goats were in the fields, one of the cow-boys used to come through town with a drum telling the people to redeem their cows or else pay a special fine. To identify your cow among hundreds was quite a job and on this day every child had a holiday from *Cheder* so that he could go with his mother to bring the cow home. This was a very pleasant task for us—to walk a mile and a half, pick out our cow from a herd of hundreds and bring her before the committee which would decide the fee. A bigger cow would cost more than a smaller one. Then we had to pull the cow home, since she was accustomed to going back in the company of other cows rather than by herself.

Another experience which I remember well occurred two weeks before Passover when two gendarmes came to our town. (This very seldom happened unless it concerned an important matter.) The first thing they asked was if anybody knew a man by the name of Labe Chazkel. Knowing that when a gendarme inquired about a person he must be in trouble, nobody volunteered to tell where Labe Chazkel lived. But the gendarmes didn't let up—they called from house to house to find him. In the meantime, word reached Labe Chazkel, who was conducting a *Cheder* at which I was a pupil, that the gendarmes were looking for him. He was very frightened and the first thing he did was send all the children home.

The gendarmes, meanwhile, decided to go to the Bureau

of Vital Statistics to find out from the officers there about Labe Chazkel. The head official, or *Chlen,* was a Jew by the name of Moishe Hiertz and he decided it would be better to help the gendarmes find Labe Chazkel, so he volunteered to go with them. Moishe Hiertz also thought he could help Labe Chazkel, who did not speak Russian.

The Chief of Police had by now heard that the two gendarmes were looking for Labe Chazkel. He felt offended that the gendarmes had not consulted him—especially since this promised to be a very interesting case. Feeling ignored, he nevertheless decided to show good will by coming to their assistance. So he dressed in his official uniform, took along two of his assistants and met the *Chlen* and the two gendarmes on their way to Labe Chazkel. It was an interesting procession: the Chief of Police, with his two assistants, the *Chlen* and the two gendarmes—all being followed by men, women and children anxious to see the outcome.

When the gendarmes reached Labe Chazkel they doubted that it was really he, since they couldn't understand how it was that people did not know this man living in the center of town. Labe Chazkel was standing in front of his house, dressed in his Sabbath garments, awaiting the gendarmes with fear.

The first thing they did was ask him to bring out a table and two chairs and start to make protocol in the Russian style: his name, occupation, age and family record—particularly questions about his brother in Ponewiecz. He didn't mind answering the questions pertaining to himself but he hesitated to give information about his brother, not knowing what it was all about. However, after answering all the questions the two gendarmes had a consultation and decided this was the man they were looking for. So they took out five rubles, handed them to Labe Chazkel and told him that before leaving Ponewiecz for Birzai they had met his brother who asked them to deliver the money for the holidays. It was a very funny experience but it also illustrates the fear of people in the small communities for anyone wearing a uniform.

In my memories there are two incidents which, while

they do not bear directly on my life, are nevertheless worth recording.

The highest official in town was a man by the name of Petrowich. He was the *Pristow,* appointed directly by the governor of the state. He and another man, whom I will mention later, made the life of the Jewish people in Birzai very difficult.

The streets of Birzai were not paved, and therefore when it rained, which was very often, they were very muddy. Sidewalks were generally made of boards about 24" wide. When two people would meet going in different directions they would try to pass each other or one would have to step down in the mud. When the *Pristow* walked on the boards, he managed to occupy the entire breadth and he always made the people he met step down in the mud; this was a great joke to him.

The central city was occupied almost entirely by Jews, and they were always dependent upon the good nature of the officials. Laws, rules and regulations were generally controlled and prescribed by the *Pristow* at his discretion and therefore you would have to call upon him to get interpretations of them. But you could not call upon him with empty hands. He always had a book on his desk and managed to be called out of the office, remarking to the visitor, "You can read the book to occupy your time until I return." But instead of reading it, you would have to leave a bill between the pages and he would interpret the request according to the size of the "gift." On Christmas he used to get enough sugar and tea to last him for a year.

But something happened—he overdid things and that did not meet with great favor from the governor of the state. Governor Klingenburg lived in Kovno and used to make calls in town from time to time. It was announced that he would visit Birzai on a certain day. Generally he would stop at the Russian priest's residence. The community would prepare a reception for him and each group would arrange to welcome him in a different way. The Jewish people would welcome him with bread and wine.

On this particular visit to Birzai, he was being received

by the Rabbi. As it happened, the Rabbi from Birzai was a sickly man and his personality was not impressive. So the Jewish leaders of Birzai decided that the Governor would not know who the real Rabbi was and they looked for a man to impersonate him. Finding the right man was easy and they picked one Chaim Elye. He was middle aged, very fine in appearance, with a nice black beard; the only thing he required was a garb with a velour hat. As it happened, the Rabbi played an important part in helping to make one of the arch enemies of the community a great friend.

The Governor and his secretary stopped off at their headquarters with the Russian priest. There was a very big crowd assembled to witness the ceremony at which he would be received by the leaders of the community. Among the people who were standing in the crowd was a man by the name of Yusko Ramisofsky. He was one of the land owners in our town and he made the life of the Jewish people miserable. He used to go from tavern to tavern, drink all the best liquors and before leaving, break up everything. In addition, he used to go into the stores taking merchandise for which he never paid and those who protested would get a beating.

Watching the ceremony was Yusko and in order to make matters lively, he stretched out his hand and if there was a woman within reach he pulled her hat or whatever he got hold of. That woman would turn around and start an argument with the person nearest her. The people, of course, had a lot of fun and after a while Yusko would do the same thing again. That woman would protest bitterly and always fought with the people who were near her, not knowing that the man who bothered here was Yusko.

As it happened, the governor's secretary was sitting in an open carriage watching all the fun. But when the governor came out he asked what was going on and I presume the secretary explained the reason for the crowd's restlessness. The governor wanted to know who was doing all the mischief and was shown Yusko. So the governor called an officer and asked him to arrest that man; when a person is arrested by order of the Governor, nobody can help him but the Governor himself.

Yusko was in jail for a long time and all the petitions to the governor were of no help. Finally the *Pristow* asked the governor what to do with Yusko and the governor replied that if the Jewish Rabbi would ask personally, he might grant him his liberty. So Chaim Elye, the substitute Rabbi, had to go to Kovno to make a plea for Yusko. He was released from jail and then became our fine friend because the Jewish Rabbi had made a trip to the governor on his behalf.

The *Pristow,* in order to show the governor that he was diligent in his duties, overdid things. Wherever there was an old bridge over a ditch he ordered a new one built. In his report on his trip, the governor remarked that Petrowich, the *Pristow* from Birzai, must have been neglectful since he had obviously just built many new bridges where previously there had been open ditches. And for that reason Petrowich was removed from his office.

So our community celebrated the good riddance of two of the men who had made Jewish life so difficult, Yusko and the *Pristow.*

ELYE KOTAINTE

Another case which is worth mentioning, although it has nothing to do with my own life in Birzai, concerns two men by the name of Elye. One was tall and the other was short. In order to differentiate between them, the short man was called Elye Kotainte. He resented this very much and tried to avoid people who used this nickname, which means "short."

He was very pious and always prayed in the same place in Shule, so that the angels who accepted his prayers would not confuse him with someone else.

He read Torah every Saturday in Shule, but when he reached the portion where Jacob said *"kotainte micol hachsodim"* he used to say *"Kotainte"* in a very low voice and finish the rest of the sentence in the usual way. The people in Shule used to say *"kotainte, kotainte",* meaning that he skipped that word. He misunderstood, thinking that the

people were calling him his nickname, so he used to get terribly excited.

This incident was a yearly event whenever the Torah reached the word *"kotainte"*. So the people from the other Shules used to gather that Saturday to have fun in the big Shule where Elye was reading the Torah and swallowing the word *"kotainte."*

The Beth-Hamedrash was a very old frame building and required a lot of remodeling and repair, but the old folks didn't want to disturb anything where their parents and grandparents had worshipped, saying what was good for my father is good enough for me.

A young generation took over the Shule and among them was a very well known man by the name of Barry Labe. He was elected president of the Shule and started to do some repairing and remodeling. The first thing he ordered was a new floor. The floor was very old and some parts were full of holes. I remember it was on a Monday morning when the workmen started to put in the new floor and they were going to begin very early in the morning. Therefore, it was arranged that morning worship would be even earlier so everyone could clear the Shule for the workmen. They started to tear up the old floor, but when they reached the spot where Elye was standing, he didn't budge, claiming that the place was holy; he knew that a great man by the name of Samuel Broches had worshipped there for years and therefore even the dirt and the mud were holy and he wouldn't permit anyone to touch it. The people watching the argument burst out with great laughter. That excited the old man so much that he raised his hands in protest and he fell to the floor—dead of a heart attack.

This tragedy had a very sad effect among the people. In fact, it was so great that the workmen who repaired the floor didn't dare touch that particular spot. I am certain that if the Shule is still in existence and the floor has been repaired, the place where Elye was standing is still intact.

In Birzai, as in any other town, there was the Beth-Hamedrash, some *minyonim* and also a Shule. The Beth-

Hamedrash and the *minyonim* were generally for prayers and for learning; the Shule was for prayers only.

I don't remember the kind of Shule we had in Birzai as it burned down when I was a child, but I heard that it was the finest structure in Lithuania. The place where the Shule had been was, of course, vacant and people were always talking about erecting a new one, but because of finances they were not able to start.

The city of Birzai belonged to Graf Tescavitch. We paid taxes directly to him. He was very seldom at his residence in Birzai as he preferred to be in Paris or Germany or Vienna.

We decided that whenever he would come to Birzai we would send a committee to ask him if he would help rebuild the Shule. Therefore we thought we would first lay the foundation and invite the Graf and his family to lay the cornerstone.

In Birzai there were no architects or any other scientific men to tell us how to put up a structure of this kind. The person who did this kind of work was Michael, the bricklayer, so he made plans for the foundation. I remember when they started it everybody helped in excavating. Even women used picks and shovels to help dig for the foundation.

I was a youngster and all the children were engaged to pick rocks and stones for the foundation; I remember the teacher used to give a half day off for all the Hebrew School children who did this work.

Michael made the foundation about six feet thick. When it was finished we waited for Graf Tescavitch to visit Birzai. I remember that when he visited the place where the Shule was to be built, that day became a holiday and every Jew in Birzai was dressed in his best to make a good appearance. The visit was very successful as the Graf promised to give all the materials—bricks, stones and even lumber—for the structure, but the Jewish people would have to pay for the labor. It took about two years to build up to the roof, and we always had trouble in collecting enough money to pay for the laborers; the building was without a roof for a year or more, waiting for money.

The Government had a unique way of extracting money from the Jewish people: every Jew had to pay a certain amount for Kosher killing. I remember it was one cent for a chicken and 25 cents for a steer. They used to have an auction so people could buy the privilege of collecting the money which we used to call *karopka.* The highest bidder would win the privilege of assessing and collecting the money. The money thus paid to the Government was to be kept in escrow and was supposed to go for maintaining Jewish synagogues or any other buildings used by the Jewish people.

But the Jews were never able to get one penny back from the Government. Any time an appeal was made to get money for some purpose an inspector was sent to find out the reason. There was one occasion when money was requested to fix the only bath house in the whole town. They sent an inspector and he reported that the Jewish people were not entitled to any money from the *karopka* as the bath house was also used by non-Jews.

When we found we could not finish the Shule, we decided to ask the Government for some money from the *karopka.* Do you know the old story of an item in the paper stating that a certain Mr. X died and the nearest relatives were requested to identify themselves? Of course, people thinking of a fortune came forward. After investigating, the lawyer decided that a certain Mr. Y was the nearest relative and he was told that the man who died was very poor and he would have to pay the funeral expenses.

I am telling this story because that is exactly what happened when the inspector came to Birzai. After making a survey he said that the walls were not straight and therefore the whole structure would have to be torn down and we were obliged to pay him a handsome sum so that he would not make that report and let the Shule stay as it was. So instead of getting money from the Government, we had to pay "funeral expenses."

I am writing this episode because it gives you an idea of Jewish life in the small communities of Lithuania and Poland.

* * *

I remember the conditions which existed in most small

towns and Birzai was not an exception. On Saturday, particularly during the fall and winter seasons when twilight was about two hours long and the Beth-Hamedrash and other Shules were dark (there was no means of illumination to last from Friday until Saturday night) there was generally a lot of mischief committed by the children. To them it was a kind of exercise—they had nothing else to do because it was dark. I used to think that if lights could be arranged to last until Saturday night, a lot of things could be done. Those dark hours would be of great value to people who wanted to study the Talmud, the Bible or any other matter, and the children could not do mischief because of the light. But, as you know, there was no gas or electricty in those days; the only lights were kerosene lamps and the containers were not large enough to hold enough fuel for 24 or 26 hours. Why not get a kerosene container large enough?

I asked all the tinsmiths to make one, but none would undertake a job of this kind. However, I was told that in the next town, Ponewiecz, there were mechanics who could make a lamp to order.

To illuminate the Beth-Hamedrash would require four big lamps and a shade with reflectors; that would cost about 30 rubles. A ruble in those days was a large amount. As an example of money in those days there were people who went around begging from house to house, either for food or cash; the smallest coin which the Government would supply was a groschen—one-half penny. This of course, was too big to give away. But the community devised a coin on a piece of cardboard; the amount was 1/8 of a kopeck, or 1/16 of a cent. You can image that to collect 30 rubles, particularly when a boy was ten years of age, was a monumental undertaking.

The only way to do it was to solicit from the worshippers in Beth-Hamedrash. I used to get up very early in the morning so as not to miss the first worshippers and stay there until the second ones came. and I remember my system whereby I posted a paper on the door and those who gave one whole kopeck would have their names written on it.

I was successful in getting the 30 rubles (it took me

almost a year) and I remember that when we got the lamps we put one in front of the Beth-Hamedrash on an evening to show to the people how much light it would furnish; the following Friday, when the lamps were dedicated, people from all the other Shules came to see our wonderful achievement—illuminating the Shule so that people could read on Saturday in twilight.

Although I was only ten years old, the people knew I would do things which others would not. The next job I took was caring for the thousands of volumes of Talmud and other Hebrew books which required new bindings or other repairs. While this job was a big one and entailed more money than the lamps, I devised a different system entirely to get it done; I had assigned to every worshipper a certain number of books for which they would have to cover expenses. When this job was successfully completed there was actually a semi-holiday in town.

* * *

I want to explain the meaning of *yeshivah*. *Yeshivah* is an institution of higher learning. There are two kinds: one is only to attain knowledge in Hebrew and Talmud. This institution is generally in small communities and the teacher is called *Rosh Yeshivah* (the dean of the institution).

There is another form of *yeshivah* which is established in the larger communities like Slobodka, Tells and Valozon and here *yeshivahs* are actually theological seminaries where young men study for the Rabbinate and other higher professions. The *Rosh Yeshivah* is hired by the community.

The students are called *yeshivah bochers,* or college boys. The way they make their way through school is unique. They are generally supported by *essin tag* (eating days). That is, every member of the community where the *yeshivah* is located has the obligation of supporting the *yeshivah bochers* one day a week. That means that every *yeshivah bocher* will have to be fed by seven different households. But this depended a great deal upon the student, as some of them would stretch a week to ten days or more in the following manner:

After the committee in charge obtained the daily bread

for the college student, he would size up a sympathetic and kind hostess and tell her that visiting three times a day for his food was costing a lot of time from his learning, and if she didn't mind he would rather take some cash and not waste time running for his food; after he got the cash for the ticket he'd try to get another day which would mean eight days and in the end there would be ten or twelve days in the week.

When I was eleven years old, my parents sent me to the *yeshivah,* starting with Poswohel for one-half year, then one year in Ponewisecz and when I was Bar Mitzvah, they sent me to Vabolnick. The reasons they sent me to Vabolnick were that there was a new *yeshivah* being organized there and it wasn't very far from Birzai, and primarily there was a man who used to study in Birzai in the *yeshivah* and it was customary for the people in town to supply a young man at the *yeshivah* with food and shelter. This was generally divided among five or seven people who would supply food and shelter for a day or two each week.

The man in question lived in Birzai for five years. He was housed at our home for three days a week, on Thursday, Fridays and Saturdays. But, as it happened, he married a very rich girl in Vabolnick and it was the thought of my parents that under his care I would probably be more happy in Vabolnick.

However, the first day I arrived in Vabolnick I met with a great disappointment. I remember that I arrived on a Thursday evening and stopped overnight in a lodging house; in the morning I went to the Beth-Hamedrash, knowing that I would meet the man under whose influence and guidance I would enter the *yeshivah* of Vabolnick. (I don't want to mention his name as his family is living in America). When I entered the Beth-Hamedrash, I received a very cold reception from him. He didn't even ask about my parents and this hurt me very much. However, the first question he asked me was whether I had breakfast. I thought this was a foolish question as he knew very well that I didn't touch food before my prayers. But after he got through with the morning prayers he wasn't in a hurry to go home.

He was kibbitzing with some of the people and when he fnished it was after ten o'clock. He folded his prayer shawl and told me to follow him to his home for something to eat. When I reached his home he didn't even introduce me to his family and I had my breakfast with the servants; with every bite of food I almost choked with humiliation. After the meal his wife didn't invite me to stay but she asked me if I would come to participate in the Saturday meal. I told her that I had made other arrangements and I left their house.

When I came back to the Beth-Hamedrash the students asked me about my friend and I explained what happened. They were not surprised at all because they knew that this was the kind of man he now was.

In those days there were no restaurants or lunch rooms and therefore, particularly on Saturday when you couldn't buy any food in the stores, I had a problem. The students told me that there was one particular man who made it his business to provide students with meals in order to get paid for it and they told me that he would probably call on me to ask if I would like to have a place for my Sabbath meal. I was advised to give him a few pennies for it.

On my second day in Vabolnick the man in charge of providing the students with meals called on me and asked if I had a place for my Sabbath meal and I said no, so he sized me up and asked whether I could chant *Kiddush.* I asked him why and he told me there was a woman whose husband was a tailor and he had left home right after the holidays, taking along his hand sewing machine, and he would probably stay away for six months, only coming home for Passover. His wife was very religious and she always wanted to get somebody on Friday nights to chant *Kiddush.* He told me that this was the best place in the whole city of Vabolnick. When I called on my benefactor and I chanted my *Kiddush,* she was so anxious for me to eat that she remarked after every bite I took, "Eat, Eat, my child, if you aren't strong you can't study." She repeated this every few minutes and it sounded like my mother when she used to feed the turkey for the holidays; she wasn't interested in whether

the turkey would like the food, but only in getting it fat enough. I couldn't finish my meal for listening to her remarks because she only wanted the *mitzvah*. I left her house that evening and I didn't return on Saturday.

Experiences in Vabolnick where I expected to get help in establishing myself made me do a lot of thinking.

On Saturday, and also on Sunday, I didn't go to the Beth-Hamedrash but spent all of the time thinking about the future. As young as I was, the first thing that came into my mind was "Is this the path which I would like to travel? Should I study in the *yeshivah* or what?"

I was not opposed to Jewish learning. In fact, I liked it. However, I was not born to establish my future by trying to please people in order to have my meals and lodging or to chant *Kiddush* for a woman's pleasure. I despised the idea of someone feeding me to make me strong so that I should study the Torah and she should have the reward.

I thought of what had become of the hundreds of young men who were going to the *yeshivah*. The fact was that of the men composing our community, only a small number of them were highly learned. The rest were ordinary people with very little Jewish knowledge.

In thinking over everything, my conclusion was that most young men who went to the *yeshivah* did not do so because it was their purpose to attain higher learning; it was more of an economic problem. There was no future for them at home; learning trades which were not highly regarded by the community. A young man could become either a tailor, shoemaker, butcher or cap-maker. There were no other trades in our community that were more refined.

It isn't that the trades mentioned above were not important, but the fact was that those craftsmen were generally segregated from the rest of the community and lived a life by themselves. In fact, we find that the houses of prayer were classified according to trade. Of course there was the Beth-Hamedrash, but in addition to that there were shoemaker's *minyon,* tailor's *minyon,* butcher's *minyon,* cap-maker's *minyon* and so forth.

I believed that this was the cause of so many Jewish

people finding themselves "at sea" not knowing exactly what to do. I believe now that this was a freak of Jewish life.

I believed that a man who wanted to go to a *yeshivah* should have certain qualifications for higher learning. The rest should study for a trade.

The fact is that there were some people in Birzai who were taking up trades like watch-making, goldsmith or even master tailor, and at the same time were not segregated from the community because they were themselves highly learned; these people learned their trades after they had acquired Jewish learning.

But I did not have the desire to go to the *yeshivah* only to solve my economic problem. My mind was set to learn a trade and at the same time to get as much Jewish learning as possible.

When I came back to Birzai and told my parents of my decision, they were not very pleased, notwithstanding the fact that "It is the duty of every father to teach his son a trade." However, if while studying a trade I would keep up with Jewish learning, they would be satisfied.

My decision was to become a goldsmith. In Birzai there was a master goldsmith by the name of Chaim Michaelson, a very fine workman, and I arranged for him to teach me the trade but of course, board and lodging would have to be provided by my parents at home. The term of apprenticeship would be from three and a half to four years without any compensation for my work.

I worked for Michaelson for three and a half years and then I got an offer from a watchmaking establishment which was owned by a man named Shogam. But according to the rules of the Lithuanian Government, no master mechanic could have a sign advertising his trade unless he got a certificate from his former master stating that he had completed his training. Michaelson would not give me a certificate because he did not want me to work for Shogam who was one of his competitors. So I had to go to Ponewiecz where there was a special committee who called themselves *Chech;* they were authorized to issue certificates to any mechanic who would pass the examination.

They gave me an order to make a silver *hodes,* which I made to their satisfaction, and on the strength of that I got a certificate as a master goldsmith. In fact, the *hodes* is still in my possession. After receiving my certificate as a goldsmith I affiliated myself with Mr. Shogam.

My salary was two rubles a week which was considered a lot in those days.

After I started to learn the trade, I tried to follow up Jewish learning as much as possible under the circumstances (as I had to work all day at the Michaelson establishment). I joined the class of *Mishnaes* which was generally a class for middle-aged and elderly men, but to attend this particular class I had to get up very early in the morning so as not to be late for work. In the evening, after prayers, there was a class of *Gemorrah* or higher learning. I joined it, spending about an hour or so each day. In the beginning the class couldn't understand what interest I could have in that particular learning, but in later days it was appreciated and recognized that I was doing the right thing—that while I was learning a trade I did not foresake Jewish learning.

* * *

The custom in those days was that when a couple was married, the bride and the groom sat apart. The bride was entertained by women and the groom by men especially invited for this purpose. Of course, the groom and the bride could not have any refreshments as this was a fast day for them.

I remember I called a group of young men together and told them that we would have to do something to entertain those grooms who were neglected by the community because of their poor circumstances and therefore no invitations were sent out. Our group was organized for the purpose of entertaining the groom on this special occasion and we took along our own refreshments, even liquor, whenever necessary. Once we had two weddings in the same week and while we managed to furnish all the refreshments at the first wedding, financially we were not in a position to entertain the groom of the second wedding. So we had an idea. Who said that people had to have liquor in order to be merry

and happy? What was wrong with cold tea? We brought some bottles of colored water which looked like whiskey and of course the groom didn't know it because he was fasting. In fact we entertained better in this instance because we liked the idea. This leaked out afterwards and was the talk of the town.

My three and a half years of apprenticeship and approximately one year as a master mechanic with Shogam passed in the usual way. I never neglected my classes which gave me the opportunity to identify myself with Jewish literature and also Jewish life.

* * *

When I reached the age of eighteen, my family and myself thought there would be no future for me in Lithuania, and therefore sooner or later I would have to go to America —so why not now? However, my parents suggested, in fact, it was their wish, that before I leave my birthplace I should get married so that they should know my wife and so that I would look upon life in a more serious way. I married Ella Wittert, a very beautiful girl who happened to be a first cousin of mine. After I got married I could not stay home for very long because it wasn't permissible for any young man in Lithuania or Russia to get married before he got through with his military service; for that reason I left Europe in May, 1892, just a few weeks after my wedding. As to my married life, I will write about that in my chapters on America.

I left for America alone, leaving Ella in Birzai to wait until I established myself. In the meantime, to provide a comfortable home for her, my employer Mr. Shogam and his family suggested that she should stay with them until I was able to send for her. They were young people and kept a fine home.

I don't know whether my outlook on life while I was in Lithuania was right or not, since it was formed from the small community standpoint without the opportunity of knowing the life of bigger cities. Therefore, in solving my problems it was on the basis of circumstances which prevailed in Lithuania.

The life of a young man in Lithuania could be classified into three categories—the rich man's son, the boys going to the *yeshivah,* and the young men who were learning a trade. The rich man's son did not look upon life as seriously as the rest of the boys of his age. He had everything he needed and probably his parents wanted to see him take up a profession such as a lawyer or doctor. A number of them, after their fathers lost their money, didn't know where to turn and many of them were lost by the wayside.

The class learning a trade were the mechanics or the craftsmen. They were living a life by themselves and associated with the rest of the working class. In the end, a great number of them succeeded in becoming master mechanics, the others remained plain working men.

Those going to the *yeshivah* could be re-classified in different categories. The young men who studied and took it upon themselves to train to be leaders, Rabbis or teachers or any other duty which would secure their future. The others from the *yeshivah* were hoping to marry a rich girl and have their fathers-in-law take care of their military obligations as well as their future. Many of them were fooled.

I want to make some explanation as to what I said about myself or any other young man who would like to leave for America to avoid military service. The fact of the matter was that while they were leaving Lithuania or Russia to avoid military service, the same young men were more than glad to enlist in the American army. I remember this especially in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. They didn't want to serve in the Russian army because of the terrible conditions which a soldier had to endure for four years, especially a Jewish boy who would have to go back to the place where he was born as he was not permitted to dwell in the big cities.

I didn't stay long enough in Lithuania to judge fully the future of a young man who was going to the *yeshivah* (I left when I was eighteen). Generally, they were all poor boys and probably went there because of economic circumstances,

but as the Talmud says: Be heedful of the poor, for from them cometh forth wisdom of the Torah.

The fact is that with most great men, either Jews or Gentiles, few of them inherited their fathers' wealth. They usually came from poor families—the great scientists, surgeons, lawyers, Rabbis, teachers and so forth and they made their own future. One might attribute their success to the fact that they had to make their own way in life and exercised their own rights with nobody dictating to them what line to pursue.

My choice of taking up a trade while following up Jewish traditional life and maintaining as much knowledge as possible in Hebrew literature was copied by other families who would probably have sent their sons to a *yeshivah* against their desire. I know that there are in New York a group of men of my age who followed my example—learning a trade and at the same time following traditional Jewish life.

Rabbi Pincus Linfeld, who was the father of Dr. Harry Linfield of New York, head of the Jewish Statistical Bureau, said to me when I called on him to say goodbye before leaving Birzai, "My son, you don't know what you have accomplished, as you have actually created a new class among the young generation—that of learning a trade and not forsaking Jewish knowledge."

If I had my life to live over again in Lithuania, I don't know whether I would do other than I did. However, under the circumstances, I did what I could and I don't regret it.

CHAPTER III

MY JOURNEY TO AMERICA

In May of 1892, I left Birzai to go to America. I had to board a ship in Hamburg, but before reaching there, had to pass through Germany. It was illegal for anyone to leave Russia without having special permission from the Government. Owing to the fact that I left Russia before I served my military term, I was obliged to pass the border from Lithuania to Germany in an illegal way. There were people specializing in that. In fact, of all the people who left Russia for America, every one passed over the border in an illegal way as none was able to get the special passport.

When we passed the border from Urbrich to Germany our first stop was Koenigsburg. There we met a committee from the *Judische Hilfsvereine* (Jewish Relief Society) and they told us that because there was an epidemic of cholera in Russia, the German government would not permit us to go through, and special *SOPES* (concentration camps) had been set up for the immigrants.

In Hamburg we were also sent to the *SOPES* in which there were approximately three thousand people waiting for ships. There were bunks or berths in which three or four people could sleep. The meals were provided in soup kitchens and we would have to line up early in the morning with our plates to get a dish of soup or whatever there was.

Among the people who were in the *SOPES,* I noticed a middle-aged man dressed in striped pants, frock coat and a

silk hat. I became acquainted with him and he told me he was from Friederstadt in Kurland; like Lithuania, Kurland belonged to Russia. His name was Jacobson, and he told me that in Friederstadt he had owned a factory, making knitted goods. He appeared very prosperous, but his family (two sons and one daughter) lived in Baltimore and it was their desire that he should join them. He told me that he was going to travel either first or second class and his plan was to buy this passage in Germany, but he was trapped in the *SOPES,* and when he reached Hamburg it was too late to get a ship with first or second class accommodations; he was obliged to go third class with the rest of the immigrants.

In the *SOPES* there was a building where the German officials were housed. They weren't very kind to the immigrants and the only person who had some influence with them was Jacobson. He was kept busy day and night, advising those immigrants who needed guidance. On my third day I discovered that Mr. Jacobson bunked on the top level of the fourth berth, and it was very hard for him to climb. My bunk was in another section of the *SOPES,* but I was lucky to get a lower berth. So I exchanged with him and that made us very close to each other.

People, seeing our relationship, started to ask me if I would intervene for them with Mr. Jacobson. He suggested to me that he would be my uncle and I his nephew so that our relationship would be closer. So anytime people wanted to go near him, they would call on me and ask me to intervene for them with my uncle. I must say that I was treated much better by the German officers than the rest of the immigrants because of my relationship with "Uncle" Jacobson.

We stayed in that camp almost three weeks. We were supposed to embark on a Saturday morning, and on Friday representatives of the *Judische Hilfsverein* called on us and asked us if we needed anything as they would be willing to go to town for anything we wanted. They took our money, but they never came back.

I will never forget that Saturday. The ship on which we were to embark was named Scande, and a group of seven

hundred fifty people was designated to leave the *SOPES* on it. We were all told to face a certain gate, and a group of doctors was there examining us. In order not to lose too much time, we were told to be ready for the examination. They wanted to examine our eyes, inspect our vaccinations and our tongues. This was a sight to see—we took off our glasses, took off our jackets, rolled up our sleeves and stuck out our tongues. Because we were so afraid we would be rejected, we stood there for hours with our tongues out.

In later years, in New York City, I ran into one of my so-called ship brothers, a man named Stein; we talked about the experiences of the *SOPES* and when we remembered the examination we had a big laugh looking at each other with our tongues out.

Our real troubles began on the ship. It took us about fifteen days to cross the Atlantic. During that time, thirty-two people died of cholera and were buried at sea. The rumor was that the doctors didn't diagnose the cases correctly and any weak spell would be considered cholera, and no effort was made to save the patient. Of course, this was only a rumor and the truth was never known.

Going through Germany we were not permitted to stop in any cities, and when we did stop, we were put in concentration camps. But on the ship, we mingled with non-Jewish people coming from the same parts of Lithuania and Russia as we did and, to our great surprise, none of the non-Jews had been kept in concentration camps. It was the opinion of some of the Jews on the ship that the Germans did not want us to stop for fear that we would settle there.

The food aboard ship was terrible; practically all of the time our diet consisted of bread and tea and sometime a herring. The drinking water was so bad that we couldn't even drink it after we became thirsty from eating herring.

As we neared America the ship was anchored off shore. We discovered the reason after two days: there was a question as to whether or not we would be permitted to land because of the cholera epidemic.

We were on the decks of the ship for fifteen days, but during that time some of the immigrants were able to com-

municate with their friends in New York as we were getting mail every other day. We were also getting newspapers and there we discovered our danger. However, a few days later, we were a little encourgaed by the report that some committee in New York was trying to save us from being sent back and finally we were ordered to Hoffman's Island and there we stayed for about five weeks. This was supposed to be the quarantine test to see whether or not any one of us was infected with cholera.

When we landed on Hoffman's Island all our clothes were taken away from us, put in bags and fumigated for twenty-four hours. In the meantime, we were supplied with blankets to cover ourselves against the chilly air.

I had a very bad experience myself. When I had reached Koenigsburg I was able, only for a little while, to go through some stores to buy some things which I needed. I bought myself a derby hat thinking this would be more American style. But when they took all my clothes at Hoffman's Island, my hat went along; of course they weren't particular about how the clothes were put in the bags and when I got back my bag the heat had ruined everything. My poor hat—it looked like a Napoleon hat; I could hardly put it on my head and the whole thing was so stiff it was just like steel.

On the second day we took a walk to examine the island and at the banks there was a group of sailors drinking beer. When I passed by, one of the sailors took up a bottle of beer and hit me over the head with such force that my hat was actually wedged against my scalp. My head was bleeding all around and when they took me down to the dispensary the doctor had an awful job taking off my hat. He said: "You ought to be thankful for your funny hat; it was so stiff that it protected your scalp against a very dangerous condition." I could then understand why "We have to praise God for any misfortune that may befall us the same as we praise God for any goodness he bestows upon us."

The rest of the immigrants had similar experiences with their clothes; practically all of the garments fell to pieces on account of the heat. Somebody—the government or the ship company—supplied us with new clothes. They were all

very cheap and the officers of the ship company weren't particular as to the sizes we got—they used their own judgment. However, we were all glad we had something to wear.

Rosh Hashana was to be spent on Hoffman's Island and we worried because we didn't have a prayer book or a Torah to read. From the newspapers we found there was a Rabbi, very famous in those days, by the name of Hillel Klein. So we sent him a letter signed by a dozen people and asked him to provide us with prayer books and a Torah. He was very prompt to answer, and we received a box with about one hundred prayer books and a small Torah. He requested us to return the Torah.

After going through inspection again, the government permitted us to land. This was about two days before Yom Kippur, on the tenth of October; I remember the exact date, as on the twelfth the people in this country were celebrating Columbus Day.

In those days, Castle Garden was the place where all the immigrants landed. We didn't have to go through any further hardship. I had all my tools and I remember that when asked what I was going to do in America, I said I was a goldsmith. A committee from H. I. A. S. (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) was there to meet us. They were very kind and told us what street cars to take. As it happened, my brother had just moved and we couldn't contact him. I had an address on Clinton Street where his father-in-law lived, so I showed them this address and they put me on a horse car and told the conductor where to let me off. The car stopped about three blocks from Mr. Horwitz, and it was hard to find the right number. I had a lot of fun looking, though! The committee in charge of asking Dr. Klein for the prayer books and the Torah had assigned to me the job of returning the Torah. People stopped to look at me and wondered what was going on—a young boy walking the streets with a Torah. However, I soon reached my brother's father-in-law. He sent word to my brother who called for me that evening to take me to his home at 336 E. 106th Street.

CHAPTER IV

NEW YORK

I arrived in New York on October 10, 1892. After resting for a few days, I started to look for a job and got one with a man by the name of Garfinkle at 56 Suffolk Street. My salary was four dollars a week and after lunches and traveling, I was left with one dollar and ninety cents. This was hard to get along on especially since I had an obligation to send some money home, and therefore I decided to look for another job.

Henry Anselowitz sold tools, materials and accessories for jewelers and watchmakers. His business was at 110 Canal Street, and it was an assembling place for jewelers and watchmakers who had just come to this country. He was very kind to all of them, freely giving advice and encouragement.

He advised me to watch the newspapers carefully to see if there was an opening for a goldsmith. One morning I read in the paper that a concern called Eisenson and Marx, a jewelry factory in Newark, was looking for a goldsmith. When I arrived in Newark, I was told that they had needed only one extra goldsmith, and the job was taken.

While I was standing there in great disappointment a messenger from a jewelry store brought in a link button and said that the jeweler wanted to have another button made to match it. The messenger was told that this would require a special die and it woud never pay to do it. How-

ever, after examining the button, I said I would make a button to match this one if I could get a job afterward. The foreman asked me how I could do it without any die and I told him that where I learned my trade, in addition to manufacturing jewelry, we also had to be tool makers and therefore I could make any tool required without depending on dies. I was promised that if I could make the button, I could get a steady job.

The factory was not very large as there were only twenty jewelers employed there. I will never forget the curiosity of the men watching me make the button. After spending more than a day, I succeeded in making a button to match as nearly as possible. My work pleased the foreman very much and I got the job. However, after I worked three days, the men left their jobs to strike for higher wages. So this was the end of my second job.

Mr. Anselowitz advised me to peddle in my neighborhood to repair jewelry and clocks. This was customary for practically all the newcomers—to knock on doors and ask if there was any jewelry or clocks to be repaired. I succeeded in getting a couple of jobs in the beginning, but the trouble was that people didn't like to trust their valuables to be taken by a jeweler and it was impossible to do the work at their homes.

The neighborhood in which I peddled was near Central Park and that was where I used to have my lunch—at one of the benches in the park. I would buy either crackers or buns and drink cold water and this satisfied me.

The jewelers or the watchmakers who were peddling for repair jobs used to carry little satchels with their tools and the face of a clock attached to the front to signify their trade. One day I was sitting on the bench in the park and an old gentleman was sitting alongside me. Looking at my satchel with the face of the clock, he asked me if I was from Switzerland as he was a great believer in the Switss watchmakers. I told him I was from Lithuania, but to him it was the same thing. He told me that he was a school director in charge of schools in that neighborhood. He told me there were about thirty clocks in the schools but none of them

kept time; the clocks had been sent to different watchmaking shops but it appeared that they couldn't do anything with them. So he asked me if I could take a job of this kind.

I told him that before I would answer, I would like to see the clocks. After I finished my lunch, he took me to one of the schools and while I was not a watchmaker, I could still see the trouble. They were wall clocks and I presumed they weren't hanging straight. I told him that I would be very glad to take the job. I called on Mr. Anselowitz and told him my problem and he told me he knew a watchmaker who was an expert but he was just as green as I was, having been in the United States for only a month. He recommended that I get in touch with that man so that he would do the actual repair work.

I got hold of the man and after examining the clocks he found I was right. All the clocks were wound by key and it appeared that the man that was winding them moved them from the right position. The two of us worked for two weeks straightening out the clocks and putting tacks on the sides so that their positions would not be disturbed again. We were told that we should wait another couple of weeks and that if the clocks kept time we would get paid. While both of us were very anxious to get the money as we needed it badly, we had to wait until the man was satisfied.

I asked Mr. Anselowitz how much I should charge for the job and he told me to leave it to the school director. Because I was the so-called contractor, I should give my assistant five dollars a week or ten dollars for the job and he would be perfectly satisfied.

After two weeks I called on the school director and I got a check for one hundred fifty dollars. So I told Mr. Anselowitz that because the watchmaker actually did the work I would give him twenty-five dollars; this gave me over one hundred dollars for myself net. This was more money than I would have made working in the factory for a whole month.

I continued peddling and while I wasn't a big success, I made enough money to pay my living expenses and also

had a little money to send home. I remember one Sunday night, after buying some material, I found that I had spent all my money and didn't have five cents left for carfare. If I hadn't been bashful, I could certainly have gotten some money from Mr. Anselowitz, but I thought that I would rather call on one of my friends on the East Side. However, wherever I called I was very embarrassed. This was Chanukah and they were all playing cards. When I came in I was invited to take a hand in the game—which was not my purpose in visiting them. Finally, I decided to go back to 110 Canal Street and ask Mr. Anselowitz to lend me some money for carfare. But when I got there I found the place was already closed. I was obliged to walk home to 106th Street and this was an experience which I will never forget; it was practically one hundred and fifteen blocks. It was a journey which took me over three hours. When I told my experience afterwards to some of my friends, they all laughed at me and said that I would never be successful if I was too sensitive to ask for help.

One Friday night my late brother was invited to visit Dr. Joseph Labe Sosnetz and he was asked to bring me along. Dr. Sosnetz was born in Birzai. I had never met him as he left when he was a young boy, in the late '80's, and emigrated to America. His father's name was Michol the Shochet, an extreme *Chassid.* However, the young Sosnetz did not follow his father's footsteps and he was obliged to leave his birthplace while he was very young. In Birzai everyone considered that he was a Godless man. In fact, when boys were not following their parent's teachings, mothers used to say: "Are you growing up to be like Joseph Labe?" Therefore, when my brother told me that we were invited to the Sosnetz home for the Sabbath meal, I asked: "Does Sosnetz observe Sabbath?" My brother's answer was: "Wait until you see him and then you will change your mind entirely."

When we reached Sosnetz's home, I found an old man with a very fine white beard, a long *talis kotan* and the *tzitzis* hanging out; I could not understand it and I wondered "Is this the same Sosnetz?" While we were talking

over matters at random and making inquiries about Birzai, he remarked that we would have to wait a little while for *Kiddish* as his nephew Simon whom he had brought to America was still working.

The whole thing was a puzzle—Joseph Labe Sosnetz was known in Birzai as a man who didn't believe in anything, and yet he appeared to me to be a very religious man —and at the same time was waiting for his nephew for *Kiddish* while he was still working. I asked Dr. Sosnetz if it was necessary to wait for a man for *Kiddish* if he was then working. He looked at me with a smile and said: "You know my son, according to the Torah there is mentioned *Zichos* (Remember the Sabbath) and also *Shemor* (You shall observe the Sabbath). He said to me that as long as a man remembers the Sabbath then this will lead to observing the Sabbath.

He asked me what the people in Birzai had actually thought about him. I said the people there did not know very much about him. The only thing they did know was that he had studied in Germany and composed a book which was entitled *"Is There A God?"* Their interpretation was that he was questioning whether there was a God in Heaven. He said that was exactly the trouble with the people in Birzai: they never read the book but the title was enough for them to interpret that he was questioning God. But if they had the patience to read it they would have found that the book dealt with the creation of the whole universe by the will of God.

A question came up about the influence which the German Jews had over the new Russian, Lithuanian and Polish immigrants. It was his opinion that the German Jews did not understand the philosophy of the new immigrant and for this reason the new settlers had not followed the advice of the German Jews on how to adjust themselves. It appeared that what the German Jews were doing for the new settlers had good aims but wrong methods.

To indicate how little the German Jews understood the life of the East Side Jews, Dr. Sosnetz told me that one evening he received an invitation from the president of the

Hebrew Educational Alliance to talk over matters pertaining to the Hebrew Educational Alliance.

Dr. Sosnetz, a great authority in Zohar, taught this class in the Hebrew Educational Alliance. Among his pupils were the late Hirsch Maslansky, the late Dr. Philip Klein and other learned people who were interested in Zohar.

In the course of the conversation, the president said to Dr. Sosnetz: "I must tell you that I am not very pleased with the progress which you have made in your class teaching Zohar." Dr. Sosnetz thought, what does *he* know about Zohar? So he asked, "If you will tell me of my faults and the improvements which I could make in my class, I will be very glad to follow your advice." Dr. Sosnetz told me that the president said: "One evening I passed by your class and I found that it was well attended by very fine, older Jewish people, but none of them was Americanized enough to take off his hat." Dr. Sosnetz said to me: "Can you imagine the fault which he found in my class—that the Orthodox Jews who are engaged in studying Zohar would not take off their hats."

He suggested to me that I should start an American way of life as well as the Jewish way of life; it was his thinking that it would be of great value to the new immigrant.

Following Dr. Sosnetz's advice, I had interested myself in the Jewish life of New York. I found that there were four different groups which in some instances were not associated with each other. There were the German Jews who were trying to appoint themselves guardians of the Jews in New York by controlling all the Jewish charitable organizations, hospitals and educational institutions. However, they failed to solve the problem of the new arrivals. In fact, they were not interested in their problems. They were interested only in trying to Americanize them. They established the Hebrew Educational Alliance at East Broadway and Jefferson Street where clubs and classes were organized under their supervision. In some instances they did

a great deal of good, but they failed in trying to dominate Jewish life in the East Side.

Eighth Street, known as headquarters for all the charities, was also in charge of the German Jews. The officers appointed to distribute the charities acted as if the money they were distributing was their own. Most of the money distributed was from a fund created by the late Baron de Hirsch.

The Hungarian Jews (the majority were from Austria) settled from Houston Street down to the East River. They were mostly interested in organizing lodges, as this was a stepping stone for some of the would-be politicians. In those days, there were three major fraternal organizations: the Order of B'nai Abraham, Independent Order of B'nai Abraham and the Sons of Judah. The officers were mostly Hungarian Jews. There were a number of clubs and wine-cellars which were used as assembling places and for entertainment. Max Schwartz, well-known on the East Side, was the owner of the East Houston Street Restaurant, famous for Hungarian wines.

There was also a Jewish settlement in Harlem from 90th Street to 125th Street. The Jewish people who settled there were small tradesmen and peddlers.

The Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews settled on the East Side, from Canal Street, East Broadway, Grant Street, starting at Third Avenue, Second Avenue, from the Brooklyn Bridge up to Fourteenth Street, Essex Street, Allen Street, and other cross-town streets, occupied in those days by Jewish and Italian pushcart peddlers selling anything from a needle to a silk hat. Thursdays and Fridays were fish days and people from all parts of the city used to buy their fish from the pushcart peddlers.

Their social life was predominantly in Landsmanshaft organizations organized according to the city or territory from which the people came. East Broadway and Grant Street were occupied by the Jewish teachers, doctors and other professional men and among themselves they used the Russian language a great deal. In fact, I learned more Russian on Canal Street than I did in Birzai.

The Rumanian Jews were interested in Jewish theatres, actors and singers. They produced men like Adler, Tomashefsky, Gordon and other great actors. Their headquarters was from Broome Street down to the River and they also occupied Second Avenue where their entertainment places and theatres were located.

The East Side had a lot of synagogues and also *minyonim* as the older people used to attend services regularly. The two most prominent Rabbis in New York City were the late Chief Rabbi Josef, and the late Chief Rabbi for the Hungarians, Dr. Philip Klein.

Jewish education was centered in the Machzikeh Hadas Hebrew School on East Broadway where the teaching was from Hebrew and Yiddish. There were no yeshivahs on the East Side until the Yeshivah Rabbi Isaac Elchonon was organized. There was much interest in the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (now known as HIAS) which was to help the new immigrants. There was also a well organized loan society where small amounts of money were loaned without any interest.

A great percentage of the Jewish immigrants were turning to the needle trades. There were no unions to amount to anything in those days and so the people worked ten and twelve hours daily. There were hundreds of "sweat shops" where work was taken from the shops to the homes and work continued during the night. Some of the needle workers managed to become owners of small shops. However, if they improved their own situations from workers to so-called bosses, the actual needle workers still put in ten and twelve hours a day.

A great number of the younger people were practising anarchist ideas and they were always trying to antagonize the religious element. I remember one Yom Kippur when the anarchists hired a hall opposite the synagogue on Suffolk Street, where Chief Rabbi Josef presided. They were going to have a dance and ball on Kol Nidre night. The Jewish people got very much alarmed and they called on the Police Commissioner to ask whether or not he could stop it. He told the committee that it wasn't in his power

to stop any dance that was conducted in a quiet way. But he said if there was any disturbance that night he would see to it that the law would take over.

This was only a hint to the committee. They certainly had enough young men who could make enough disturbance and the police sent some patrol wagons and all the celebrators were locked up. They were kept in jail until it was time to break the fast. Their lawyer complained to the magistrate that they weren't fed during the twenty-four hours while they were in jail and the magistrate answered that he knew it was Yom Kippur, a fast day, and therefore he didn't want to insult them by feeding them.

This was certainly a great laugh afterwards on the East Side.

* * *

I struggled along in New York for almost a year. One day when I called at Anselowitz's store I found he was talking to a man by the name of Fried from Newark. When I came in, he said to Mr. Fried: "Joe, here is a man who will answer all your qualifications. He is a goldsmith and also understands business and he will make a very good man in your store."

Mr. Fried explained that he had a jewelry store at 72 Prince Street in Newark. His customers were peddlers who sold jewelry on the installment plan. Mr. Fried himself, while he knew all about the jewelry business, was not a goldsmith and he needed a goldsmith and someone to take charge of the store. We agreed that, in addition to board and lodging, Mr. Fried would pay me five dollars a week— a very attractive proposition in those days.

I stayed with Fried about two months and after that we decided that we also needed a watchmaker. So A. L. Shiller who was afterwards well-known in Scranton was engaged.

A short time afterward, Mr. Fried proposed that we should all be partners— that is to say, Fried. myself and Shiller would share all the profits and losses of the store. We worked together in harmony for about three months when a general strike of the hat-makers (Newark was head-

quarters for them) paralyzed the entire trade, particularly the Jewish hat-makers on whom we depended for business. We struggled along for a couple of months and lost our entire capital, as the peddlers who were buying jewelry from us could not pay their bills on account of the strike.

We thought it would be no use for the three of us to stay in Newark, so we decided that one of us should look for another place; we selected Shiller because as a watchmaker he didn't have very much to do in the store. It was suggested that we go to Denver, Colorado, but Shiller landed in Avoca, Pennsylvania. He settled there, rented a store on Main Street, bought a little stock, and did very well for the first couple of weeks. We decided to liquidate in Newark and move to Avoca.

For reasons which I can not explain now, it was Shiller's idea that the shop should go under the name of Shiller Bros. and when Fried arrived in Avoca, he was introduced as a Shiller. Fried stayed in Avoca a couple of weeks and then we decided that Avoca was not big enough to support three families and therefore we decided to rent a little store in Pittston, at 285 Main Street. Fried engaged himself immediately in peddling, soliciting watch and clock repars. Shiller was in charge of the work. Then Fried decided to bring his family and I was left in Newark to liquidate the store and also to move to Avoca.

It was Shiller's idea that I should also be a Shiller, to which I didn't consent. I told him I was a Cohen and not a Shiller and started a little argument. After a while I was convinced that it was his idea to dissolve the partnership and not to recognize the loss which we sustained in Newark. So we dissolved partnership: Shiller was left in Avoca not recognizing our loss and I stayed with Fried.

Our difficulty was that we didn't have anybody to repair watches and there was no way of getting a watchmaker unless we brought in a man from New York or Newark. This we did not like because this man could easily start a shop for himself as the rent was very cheap—we paid only ten dollars a month for the store.

When we left Newark, the late M. Yaseen was also

living there and he asked us whether we could take him to Pittston as he couldn't make a living in Newark. So we decided to bring him to Pittston and to take him in as a partner.

The partnership did not last very long as I decided to stay in Pittston only until we could make up my share of the loss in Newark; owing to a disagreement between us, I asked for an accounting and after deducting my share of the loss from the profits made in Pittston, I was left with thirty-four dollars. I decided I would leave Pittston and go to another community.

One reason I didn't like Pittston was that when we arrived there were only about three Jewish families, no place for worship and the only Jewish settlement was in West Pittston (Sturmerville). I remember that I organized a *minyon* in West Pittston, bringing a Torah from the Flats in Scranton, and there we used to have a gathering every Saturday. But this did not satisfy my ideas of a Jewish life.

It was recommended that Scranton would be an ideal town to settle in, so in the early part of May, 1894, I took my thirty-four dollars and my jewelry tools and I came to Scranton.

CHAPTER V

I ARRIVE IN SCRANTON

In writing the history of the Jewish life in Scranton as I found it and the progress and accomplishments of the following chapters, I am hampered because no records of Jewish activities have been kept. The only records available are probably old B'nai B'rith and Madison Avenue Temple minutes books and those of other organizations perhaps, but those records deal only with their own problems. Therefore, all my writings, from memory, are substantiated with some statements from people who still remember the facts.

Writing from memory means living through past events. Every chapter in my writings has actually been experienced, and while all my writings do not pertain solely to Scranton, they are important as these events have influenced Scranton communal life.

I personally assume responsibility for everything I am writing about, not being influenced by anyone.

Please remember that I am writing this not as a novel or a romance, but as historical fact; I rely on my memory, which, thank the Lord, serves me well, and also on documentary evidence which I have in my possession.

When I arrived in Scranton in May, 1894, my capital consisted of thirty-four dollars in cash. I left my belongings at the Central Railroad Station until I could get a place to stay.

I decided that I would spend a week or more looking

around the city to see if I liked the place well enough to make it my permanent home; I thought it would take a little time to see what type of community Scranton was.

My first visit was to the late Nathan Druck, who was Cantor of the Penn Avenue Synagogue. He was the father of Sam and Jack Druck. I asked him to recommend me to a Jewish boarding house where I could stop temporarily until I decided what to do. He suggested a house at 306 Raymond Court run by the late L. Epstein. I made my temporary quarters there for room and board at three dollars and fifty cents a week. I told Mrs. Epstein that this was only temporary as I would like to look around the town first.

In looking over Scranton, the first impression I had was of the electric street cars and I was told they had operated since December, 1886. This was a great surprise to me as New York City was still running horse cars.

Some of the pioneers of Scranton, I recollect, were the late James Linen, president of the First National Bank, Mr. Simpson of Cleland-Simpson Company, E. J. Lynett, editor of the *Times,* John T. Porter, president of the Trader's National Bank, Thomas Foster, organizer of the I. C. S., Ralph Weeks, who later became president of the I. C. S., and the Connells and Jermyns, who were practically sole owners of the anthracite coal, the Belins, and the Scrantons, who owned the Gas and Water Company, Judge Archbald, Judge Edwards, the Gunster Brothers, the Casey Brothers, Judge Gunster and John Farrenhold, C. S. Weston, Thomas F. Murphy, who was later associated with the *Scranton Times,* A. B. Warman, who conducted the Lackawanna Laundry (I remember that he and his father delivered their laundry on a push cart), A. R. Gould, a famous carriage maker, Snell who had a blacksmith shop in the 300 block of Penn Avenue, where the late Jacob Smith erected a four story building now occupied by Israel Allen.

All of these people were the leaders of the communal life of Scranton.

Scranton had three newspapers, *The Morning Republican,* published by the late Joseph Scranton, two afternoon

papers, *The Scranton Times,* published by E. J. Lynett and *The Truth,* which is not in existence anymore, published by Barrett & Jordan. Two Sunday papers, one German paper published by Frank Hummler, and *The Scrantonian,* organized in 1897, published by the late Richard Little, Sr.; the two Sunday papers were published at 324 Penn Avenue in the Old People's Printing office. Both Sunday papers were delivered on Saturday night via wheelbarrows to the newsstands and stationery stores.

The population of Scranton was one hundred and two thousand, and while it was headquarters for the anthracite mines, there were also other industries like Lackawanna Iron and Steel and the Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company.

The life of the miners was not very pleasant and they all had to live in company houses and buy their necessities in the company store. However, a big change was made in 1901: after striking for six months for better pay and living conditions, the late John Mitchell organized the miners' union and from that time on, the miners' living conditions changed entirely.

The Jewish people were not employed either in the mines or in the factories. Their productivity was of a different category. In the early stages, when they arrived in Scranton, they were engaged primarily in peddling; while you could not consider them as producers, they did contribute a great deal to the life of the working class since all the merchandise was brought to the homes of the people, saving expense in traveling and time in making purchases.

Later on, they were engaged in light manufacturing, like ladies' dresses and men's clothing, and this, I consider as a great industry; the working man could not get along without clothing and someone had to make it. As merchants, they contributed a great deal to the life of the community; they were the medium between the manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer and consumer. Without their activities, commerce would be at a standstill.

It isn't always only those working in the mines or factories who are the sole producers. Newspapermen, lawyers,

doctors, city officials, while not employed in factories or mines, make an indispensable contribution to life.

MAIN BUILDINGS THEN AND NOW

THE DIME BANK BUILDING was just being finished.

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK site was occupied by the Trader's National Bank and erected in 1896.

THE HOTEL JERMYN was a hotel called the Forest House, an old frame structure (the Hotel Jermyn was built in 1896).

THE HOTEL CASEY site, until 1909, was all old frame buildings.

THE CONNELL BUILDING, which was erected in 1903, was only three stories high.

THE SCRANTON NATIONAL BANK was built in 1914.

The present Y.M.C.A. was erected in 1901; prior to that it was situated on Wyoming Avenue in the old Wymbs Building.

SCRANTON LIFE BUILDING was an old frame livery stable; the Scranton Life Building was erected in 1915.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE was built in 1924 and prior to that it occupied the present Scranton Electric Building.

SCRANTON DRY GOODS COMPANY was erected in 1897 and was the old Wyoming House also known as the Hay Market.

LACKAWANNA RAILROAD STATION was built in the early 1900's and the old station was located in the 100 block of Lackawanna Avenue now being used as a freight house. The I. C. S. building on Wyoming Avenue was just finished. Its office headquarters was in the 400 block of Wyoming Avenue, at the present D & H Building.

DAVIDOW BUILDING was all old frame buildings occupied mostly by physicians. Myer Davidow bought the old buildings in 1912 and extended them for commercial purposes.

The business blocks were primarily the 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Lackawanna Avenue. The 400 and 500 blocks were not considered for any business enterprises.

In those days, the people had less worry than they have today, life was very dull and everyone looked for something sensational to talk about. Something happened between two merchants on Lackawanna Avenue as follows:

There were two pawnbrokers on Lackawanna Avenue; one was at 105 Lackawanna Avenue, corner of Franklin

Avenue. His name was Joseph Green and he was called very affiectionately Uncle Joe. The other was located on the 200 block of Lackawanna Avenue. I do not want to mention his name as his family is still in Scranton; I'll call him Mr. X. There was always rivalry between Uncle Joe and Mr. X looking for customers. The most profitable customers for the pawnbrokers were the small gamblers. They used to borrow a small amount for a day or two, redeeming it, lose it and borrow again. There was one customer in particular, Mr. M. B. He was a very good customer, but he was doing all his business with Uncle Joe. Mr. X was always after Mr. M. B. asking: "Why don't you do business with me?" Mr. M. B. said: "Well, I wouldn't mind, but you know Uncle Joe and I are great friends—but someday I might do business with you."

One day Mr. X met Mr. M. B. and he said: "You promised to do business with me. Why don't you come around?" Mr. M. B. said, "I'm sorry, I made a loan yesterday and I forgot all about you." Mr. X said: "Did you give the business to Uncle Joe?" "Yes."

Mr. X asked him how much he borrowed and what was charged. Mr. M. B. said: "I pawned my watch and my chain and my gold ring. I got $50.00 but I have to redeem it for $54.00, three dollars interest and one dollar insurance." Mr. X said to him: "I'd do it much cheaper."

"How much?" "Not more than two dollars. I'll tell you, you give your ticket and I'll redeem it for you. Of course, the ticket calls for fifty-four dollars. I'll pay Uncle Joe the fifty-four dollars, and you can redeem it for fifty-two dollars."

"I don't like that. You give me the two dollars and you can have the ticket."

Mr. X gave M. B. the two dollars and M. B. gave Mr. X the ticket. Mr. X was very happy as he made a very good customer for the future.

Here is what happened: Mr. X called on Uncle Joe and he said: "I want to redeem M. B.'s watch, chain and gold ring." Uncle Joe said: "Where's the ticket?" Mr. X gave the ticket to Uncle Joe and Uncle Joe put on his glasses and

examined it very carefully and asked: "How did you get this ticket?" Mr. X said: "Well you know M. B. and I are great friends and he made up his mind to do business with me. Here is the fifty-four dollars and I want to get the watch, chain and ring." Uncle Joe examined the ticket again carefully, opened the safe, took out a sealed package marked "Property of Mr. M. B. to be redeemed for fifty-four dollars." Mr. X took the package very happily. He had a new customer.

He ran to his store, opened the package and he found an old gold ring worth about $2.50, a brass chain worth 25c and a New Era watch which cost $1.75. Mr. X got very excited and arrested Uncle Joe and M. B. for conspiracy. When they appeared before Alderman Miller, Uncle Joe said that Mr. M. B. was an old customer and a friend and it was no misrepresentation. The ticket called for a gold ring, watch and chain. It didn't specify what kind. If M. B. brought in marbles I'd give him any amount he wanted as the articles he left me were only for identification. Both of them were discharged but Uncle Joe arrested Mr. X for false arrest and he had to pay one hundred dollars fine plus costs of twelve and a half dollars.

This episode livened up the community for the next six months.

* * *

I have no figures as to the number of Jewish families in Scranton. I found that they were living in different sections of the city and were composed of German Jews, Hungarian-Austrian Jews, Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews.

The Reform Congregation was organized in 1860. Linden Street Temple was built in 1867. The German Jews were the first settlers. Their place of worship was the Linden Street Temple, strictly Reform, although I was told that in the early days they were still using prayer shawl and skull caps. They looked upon the other Jewish people as second class citizens. They did not associate with them either socially or otherwise. The German Jews were all store keepers. Their leaders in business were Samter Brothers Company, consisting of the late Samuel Samter, Ben Samter,

and Ike Samter. Ike was blind, but in spite of his handicap he was still at his business every day. Kramer Brothers owned a store in the 300 block of Lackawanna Avenue. Goldsmith's Bazaar was owned by the late Aaron and Saul Goldsmith. E. J. Goodman, father of Manny Goodman, former treasurer of Madison Avenue Temple, kept a shoe store on Lackawanna Avenue. The Davidows were Nathan and Myer. Nathan kept a jewelry store in the 200 block of Penn Avenue. Louis Oettinger kept a furniture store trading as the Economy Furniture Company on Wyoming Avenue. Lauer and Marx had a clothing store in the 300 block of Lackawanna Avenue. Bernard Lehman had a tailor and clothing shop on Lackawanna Avenue. The Beehive was owned by the late Moses Brown, father of the late Gus Brown; he had a fine department store. Dr. Elias Roos was a famous physician and surgeon. Ackerman Brothers owned a grocery store. N. B. Levy and Brothers were wholesale jewelers. George Phillips was also a wholesale jeweler.

The leaders among the German Jews were Simon Rice, who was the president of the Reform Temple; F. L. Wormser played a big part among the German Jews and also in politics after he was elected as a school director from the eighth ward. Among them was R. J. Cohen, who kept a liquor store, and Daniel Jacobs who conducted a livery stable. R. J.'s wife was head of the German Jewish charities organization called the Deborah Society. They were also interested in the B'nai B'rith whose members consisted of German Jews, the leading merchants in the city. To my recollection, neither Hungarian or Russian Jews were affiliated with the organization.

It will probably be a surprise that Mifflin Avenue was one of the residential streets for the German Jews like Samters, Krotoskys and so on. It was considered a fine residential block in those days.

Their spiritual leader was Rabbi Firelicht who was a very fine man; later on, I will explain the part which he played in helping to organize the Montefiore Hebrew School.

The group of the Hungarian-Austrian Jews almost exclusively lived in the Flats like South Washington Avenue,

River Street, Hickory Street, and the Bellevue section. Their place of worship was on Hickory Street and Kellum Court and the Hickory Street building was later sold to the Scranton School Board and is now occupied by #6 School; they later erected a new building on South Washington Avenue. These people were engaged in business or peddling. Among their leaders were Max Judkowitz, Moses and Joseph Schwartz, Lebowitz and Davidowitz. All of them were in the grocery business dealing primarily with the foreign population. The late Ignatz Oram and the late Jacob Harris were saloon keepers. B. Levy occupied a shoe store on South Washington Avenue at the corner of River Street. Bernard Spiegel was a milkman. David Harris kept a wholesale Dry Goods store. Jacob Mechlowitz owned a furniture and dry goods store on South Washington Avenue. There were also Zelig Grossinger, Eliyokem Eisner, (a great Talmudist), Herman Eisner, Israel Eisner, and H. B. Eisner. These were some of the leading Jews in the Flats section in those days. There were no friendly relations between the Jews from the Flats and the Jews up town. The Jews from the Flats were interested in lodges and fraternal organizations. I do not recall whether or not they had a rabbi.

The Russian and Polish and Lithuanian Jews occupied Central City, like Penn Avenue, Franklin Avenue and courts like Raymond and Hallstead and Lee Court. I will name some people who were an important factor in those days in the Jewish community: Marcus Solomon who kept a shirt factory on Franklin Avenue was a highly learned man and a leader of the Jewish community. B. C. Levy kept a hardware store at 409 Penn Avenue and was a very fine Jew. Barnet Levy was engaged in the junk business. Nathan Suravitz owned a wholesale dry goods store on Penn Avenue. Reuben and Yeckel Breakstone were great Talmudists. Isadore Finkelstein and Aaron Goldberg, while their surnames are not the same, were brothers, and I found that they started in Scranton by peddling hot dogs in the theatres and other assembling places in the evenings. Later on, their enterprise was in wholesale tobacco known as the Imperial Tobacco Company. Isadore Finkelstein is now in

Detroit and Aaron Goldberg lives in New York. There were also Simon Siegel and Louis Rosenberg who was the father of Milton M. Rosenberg, a leading physician in the city today.

Alexander Grass, who at that time was engaged in the junk business, was the father of Mrs. Harry Grossinger and Ethel Suravitz. There was Louis Epstein who kept a boarding house in Raymond Court and was also a pressed cheese dealer. Simon Hinerfeld, grandfather of Sidney Hinerfeld, kept a grocery store on Penn Avenue. Pincus Plottle kept a book shop on Penn Avenue. Sachnas Benyas, a great *chocham* was the father of Dora Cohen. I. Harrison kept a jewelry store on Franklin Avenue, Nathan Kaplan and Wolf Seidman, Max Shapiro and J. M. Frank— I am mentioning all these names of people who played a certain part in Jewish life, either good or bad, in those days.

The population, as I have appraised it, was probably about one hundred families living in the central city consisting of Penn, Franklin Avenues and so forth. Their place of worship was the Penn Avenue Synagogue and their Rabbi was a man by the name of Feinberg and their Cantor was Nathan Druck.

While I was living with the Epsteins, I learned a great deal about Jewish life primarily in the Central City. As mentioned before, there was sort of a segregation between the German Jews, the Hungarian-Austrian Jews and the Jews from Central City. I was primarily interested in the life of the Jewish people of Central City and therefore, I gave a great deal of time in the beginning to study that particular group. In the evenings there was often a gathering at the Epstein's house and from them I learned a great deal as to what was going on. While they all worshipped at Penn Avenue Synagogue, they were not in harmony with each other. There were always quarrels and sometimes fights, particularly when it came to the election of officers and the election of a cantor.

I remember one incident after an election. A small group left the Penn Avenue Synagogue and started a *minyon* by themselves, renting a room on Penn Avenue, corner

of Linden Street. The leader of this particular group was a man by the name of Moses.

However, the *minyon* did not last very long, so Moses left the *minyon* and took the Torah along with him. He was arrested for stealing the Torah and was brought before the magistrate, Alderman M. J. Ruddy. After listening to the charges against Moses, the alderman scratched his head, as the whole thing was a puzzle to him, so he made this remark, "I don't understand the whole matter, but the way I see it, Moses gave the Bible, and Moses took the Bible, and what is it all about?"

The most peculiar thing was that every man had a nickname. Some of those names were Kalta Flaisch, Tzimas, Geschichte, Lamener and The Ligner. The funniest part was that you would not have to mention the real names; if you mentioned the nickname, everyone would know to whom you were referring.

What I learned up to that time of Jewish life, its conduct and aspirations, was not very encouraging and I was questioning whether Scranton would be the right place for me to settle. I was wondering if there was a class of people in Scranton whose aspirations were higher than Shule politics, elections and so on. But of course, I couldn't ask if there was a better type in Scranton.

So I decided to do something which wasn't very practical from a financial standpoint, but to me it was of great importance. I decided to spend all my money to find out if there was a different kind of person in Scranton. I decided that because the Festival of Shevuoth was approaching, I would go to Shule, buy an honor and pay such a high price that I would succeed in smoking out such people who were probably in hiding.

As stated in the beginning, my whole capital when I came to Scranton was thirty-four dollars. For the few weeks I spent in looking around Scranton, I probably spent half of it but I decided that when I went to Shule, I would buy *maftir* and would pay the enormous price of fifteen dollars —equivalent to a five years annual dues for the Penn Avenue Synagogue. So I went to Shule and when the man called

out how much for the honor of *maftir,* I remember that the first offer was one shilling, or twelve and a half cents and the second offer was two shillings. I came out with my offer of fifteen dollars and there was a tremendous excitement as they looked for me. I presume they must have thought I was a millionaire. But it worked miracles. Right after the services, everybody in Shule shook hands with me. They asked my name, what I was doing, and how long I intended to stay in Scranton. In the evening people called on me and among them were some intelligent men like the late B. C. Levy, Barnet Levy, A. Goldberg and Isadore Finkelstein. While they were not organizing Jewish life because they didn't have anybody to lead it, there was a lot of good material in them for an ideal Jewish life in Scranton.

I began looking around for a temporary job among the jewelers. One of them, a German by the name of Lewis Riker, was a very fine gentleman, and while I couldn't tell him exactly why I hesitated to stay in Scranton, my question was whether I could succeed in getting enough work from the jewelry stores to enable me to make a living. I asked him whether he could help me in case I decided not to stay in Scranton and spent all the money I had. I was assured that after staying in Scranton for some time if I would decide to leave, he would give me enough work in his jewelry store to enable me to make expenses to look for another place.

After I got acquainted with some of the people by being invited to their homes, I found that there was a very fine group of Jewish people in Scranton and, if properly organized, we could lead a very fine Jewish communal life. So I decided to stay.

I made a thorough canvass among the jewelers and they promised that they would give me their repair work and also any new orders. So I rented a place at 324 Penn Avenue and I established myself there doing all kinds of jewelry repair and new work.

In the meantime, I started to look around to see what to do in order to establish a real Jewish community. I thought that first I would see what kind of religious train-

ing the Jewish children were getting. I found that there was a *Cheder* in Raymond Court; the teacher was a man by the name of Rothstein who was teaching all the children, merging them into one class, and his system was Hebrew translated into Yiddish.

I spoke to some of the people who were interested in building Jewish life and I took up the question as to whether it was proper to translate Hebrew into Yiddish when the children could probably not even understand the teacher. They all made fun of me and told me I was already a "Yankee." The fact of the matter is that in those days I could understand Yiddish much better than English. However, it was my idea that the children should have their translations in English.

I spent a lot of time in Rothstein's *Cheder* to observe if the children understood the Hebrew translations into Yiddish.

I remember that on one of my calls the teacher was explaining the structure of the Tabernacle and he told the children that the width of the Tabernacle was ten *aelen* (yards) wide. I was wondering if the children knew the real meaning of *aelen* since it appeared to me that when the children tried to repeat the word they said *nailen*. So I called one of the pupils aside and asked him how high the Tabernacle was and he said "ten *nailen* wide." I asked him what a *nailen* was and he said it was something that was used to hammer two pieces of wood together or to put a nail in the wall to hang a picture on. In other words, according to his idea, the width of the Tabernacle was ten nails wide.

I called the people who were interested in Jewish education and I explained to them what I found and I told them I was sure the children did not understand the teacher's Yiddish.

After discussing this matter pro and con, we called in Rabbi Firelicht of the Linden Street Temple; while he was the Rabbi of the Reform Temple, he had received his education in Europe and he observed all Jewish traditions. He was a very liberal-minded man and notwithstanding the fact

that he was a Reform Rabbi, he appreciated the fact that our children must be educated in the Orthodox style.

My associates were not very pleased that I consulted Rabbi Firelicht as they thought he was too Reform. So we decided to call in a man from New York, and after going over all the different personalities who were experts in Jewish education, we agreed upon Dr. Joseph Sosnetz.

Dr. Sosnetz recommended a young man to me by the name of Sol Rabinowitz, highly educated and speaking English fluently, and also a highly learned Hebrew scholar, whom he thought would be an ideal teacher for our new Hebrew school. Mr. Rabinowitz came to Scranton and made a very good impression upon us, fully agreeing that the proper system of teaching the Bible was to translate from Hebrew to English. After we organized the school, Mr. Rabinowitz became our head teacher.

CHAPTER VI

MONTEFIORE HEBREW SCHOOL AND LINDEN STREET TEMPLE

In 1894 we started to organize the Hebrew school. A small committee consisting of Marcus Solomon, B. C. Levy, Barnet Levy, Simon Siegel, and Nathan Suravitz, was called together to talk it over. We decided to call in Dr. Firelicht who was then Rabbi of the Reform Congregation. At that meeting it was decided to name the Montefiore Hebrew School as Moses Montefiore was very popular in those days. We also decided to incorporate the school.

The following officers were elected: A. B. Cohen, president; Isadore Finkelstein, vice-president; Simon Siegel, vice-president; B. C. Levy, secretary, and Nathan Suravitz, treasurer.

Our first step was to raise some money, so we decided to follow the old custom of going out on *Hoshanah Rabbah* night to collect money for the poor known as *temche.* The custom used to be that leaders visited members of the community during the night and offered blessing for the New Year in return for money to be distributed to the poor.

I remember that on that night a committee was appointed to visit every Jew in the neighborhood and make him a *"Misheberach"* and we had a lot of fun because nobody expected to get visitors during the night. We collected over one hundred and fifty dollars that night. In those days it

was a lot of money and, according to our budget, it enabled us to pay salaries for teachers for a couple of months.

Our difficulty was that we had no headquarters. So finally, after great effort, the officers of the Penn Avenue Synagogue gave us permission to temporarily establish ourselves in the gallery occupied by the women worshippers. We advertised for teachers and we were successful in engaging two whose reputations were very good, namely Sol Rabinowitz, who later became a physician, and Abe Blumberg. Both were highly educated men and they also agreed that the best method was to translate Hebrew into English.

It is surprising to remember how low salaries were in those days: we paid each teacher twenty-five dollars a month. Of course, the Rabbi of Penn Avenue Synagogue was only getting one hundred fifty dollars a year and Cantor Druck was not getting, but was promised, three hundred dollars a year. So twenty-five dollars a month in 1894 was a pretty good salary.

Because of disagreements about the new way of teaching, the group which represented the Montefiore Hebrew School had much trouble with the members of Penn Avenue Synagogue. Our quarters with them didn't last very long.

I remember when one of the teachers called me up and said that one of the trustees had chased all the children out and also thrown all the books in the street. When I reached the place I didn't know what to do. It was a pitiful sight: the teacher and the children watching a heap of Hebrew books on the sidewalk. Among the people who passed by was an old gentleman by the name of John J. Howley, who was the proprietor of Howley Hall at the corner of Penn Avenue and Mulberry Street. He stopped and asked what was the trouble. Of course, we wouldn't tell him the real truth so we told him that the roof was leaking from the rain. He said we couldn't stay in the street so he asked us to go with him so that he would give us a place for school. He took us to his hall and was kind enough to give us free rent, heat and light and even instructed the janitor to clean the rooms. All this was gratis. We stayed almost a year

and were very thankful to the old gentleman and I am telling this story in reverence to his memory.

While the late John Howley was kind enough to take us into his hall, we couldn't take advantage of him for very long so we appealed to the School Director from the Sixteenth Ward for permission to use No. 36 School on Franklin Avenue for afternoon sessions of the Hebrew School. The arrangements were not very pleasing because of the janitor who objected that the Hebrew School after public school hours didn't give him enough time to clean the rooms.

The members of the Montefiore Hebrew School always had trouble with the Penn Avenue Synagogue; we were very anxious that the Board of Directors of Penn Avenue Synagogue should be sympathetic to the Hebrew School so that we could move back without any interference.

In 1898, the members of Penn Avenue Synagogue had arguments among themselves and it reached the point of refusing to pay Cantor Druck his wages of three hundred dollars and interest on a mortgage amounting to two hundred and fifty dollars. Some of the board members of the Montefiore Hebrew School were called in by the Penn Avenue group to see whether or not peace could be made. But one group was so stubborn they wouldn't listen to any sound argument and remained determined not to pay either Druck or the interest. So they decided to sell the Penn Avenue Synagogue in order to avoid their honest debts—and they passed a motion to sell the Penn Avenue building to the Montefiore Hebrew School. A meeting of the entire membership of Penn Avenue Synagogue was called and they voted that for the consideration of one dollar and subject to the indebtedness of the Penn Avenue Synagogue, the building should be sold to the Montefiore Hebrew School.

When we, the members of the Montefiore Hebrew School, took over the building, our first step was to borrow $550 from the bank and to pay Cantor Druck and also the mortgage interest. In order to avoid future trouble we sent a letter to the Penn Avenue members stating that their rent would be about fifty dollars a month or six hundred dollars a year in order to ensure enough money for the interest and

Cantor Druck. They weren't very pleased at the prospect of a lease with the Montefiore Hebrew School, so they left the building in our hands and they rented a hall to hold services.

When Montefiore Hebrew School took possession of it, the synagogue gallery was re-established as class rooms; we were happy to have a temporary place and to look forward either to remodeling the gallery or to having a new place for worshipping and teaching.

The Montefiore Hebrew School, while it was primarily engaged in education, took in all Jewish life. The Orthodox Jews of Scranton looked to the School leadership, not only to take care of the childrens' education, but also to participate in and organize Jewish life.

LINDEN STREET TEMPLE

The Linden Street Temple was occupied by the Reform Jews, many of whom lived on Mifflin Avenue and Franklin Avenue. When they moved up to the Hill section, they decided to sell the Linden Street Temple and to erect a new temple on Madison Avenue. Some of the Reform members said that Linden Street was becoming a *"Kugel Strasse."* The Linden Street Temple was offered for sale for ten thousand dollars and they were negotiating with Joseph Kelly, who was planning to convert it into a livery stable.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Montefiore Hebrew School, we decided to approach the Linden Street Board to see whether or not we could buy the Temple. I was authorized to approach the late B. Moses who was President of the Temple to see what arrangements could be made on behalf of the Montefiore Hebrew School. The first question I was asked by Mr. Moses was how much money we had. I told him we didn't have any, but we could probably raise three or four thousand dollars for the first payment. He told me plainly that the Linden Street Board would never entertain a proposition whereby we would make a first payment and take possession, since in case of failure to pay the balance it would be difficult to dispossess us.

The Montefiore Board decided to take the matter up directly with the Linden Street Board, and I was instructed to appear before their meeting to see what arrangements could be made to take over the building. I appeared before the Board of Linden Street Temple without being invited, and told them that I was representing the Montefiore Hebrew School, which was occupying the Penn Avenue Synagogue—not a desirable place for worship because it was next to a livery stable and there was no room for classes. I asked them what terms could be made for us to buy the Linden Street Temple. They asked me how much money we had and I told them we didn't have any, but I believed we could raise three or four thousand dollars. I was asked to retire, and they said they would let us know in a day or two what arrangements could be made.

The late Rudolph Goldsmith was appointed to negotiate with us, and at the first meeting he told us that they would not consider selling us the building unless we had the entire ten thousand dollars; he claimed that Montefiore Hebrew School members were the same as the members of the Penn Avenue group, and the record of the old Penn Avenue members did not justify having business dealings with them. Of course this was out of the question, as we could never raise ten thousand dollars.

We brought back the outcome of the meeting to the Board of Directors of Montefiore Hebrew School and suggested that a committee of five consisting of Marcus Solomon, Nathan Suravitz, Simon Segal, Isadore Finkelstein and Barnet Levy should propose to Mr. Goldsmith that they were authorized to buy the building on the following terms: (1) Pay four thousand dollars cash and the balance to be paid in five years; (2) the trustees to occupy the building upon payment of the four thousand dollars and to make such alterations as they might find necessary.

Mr. Goldsmith rejected the offer of the committee claiming that they were of the old Penn Avenue group and he would not do business with them. However, he said, if they would not mind a contract on the terms suggested made with A. B. Cohen as trustee, with the understanding that he would

not have the right to make any transfer to any organization until the entire amount be paid, they would agree to Mr. Cohen as trustee since he did not belong to the old Penn Avenue group.

I didn't like the idea that I should be the one to make the contract as trustee for two reasons: first, because of the responsibility, and second, I thought that we should have a committee of three to five, instead of one man. They wouldn't entertain that proposition, and said that unless I was willing to make the contract representing Montefiore Hebrew School, the deal was off. We were forced to accept the terms of Linden Street and in 1909, we took over the building.

The Montefiore Hebrew School, in those days, was practically a closed organization, as new members could not be admitted unless the Board of Directors as a whole were satisfied to take them in. This was done so that the program which we had adopted, to organize Jewish life in a modern way, should not be interrupted. However, when it came to the question of buying a building, we had to enlarge our membership. Therefore, we opened our doors and took in about sixty new members, every one of whom was carefully picked. We called a meeting in the old Hubert Hall on Wyoming Avenue to consider the question of buying the building. When I as President opened the meeting and explained the plan to the gathering, it didn't meet with the approval of the entire group since they claimed that we didn't have any money, and asked how we could consider a proposition of this kind. I could see that the sentiment of the majority was such that if I should take a vote we would lose, so I announced a rule whereby the minority would prevail. I explained that this gathering was to buy, and that whoever was not satisfied with it could leave the hall. However, they refused to do so. I asked that those in favor should raise their hands and there were seventeen people who did so, so I suggested that we seventeen should leave the hall and have a separate meeting. We left, and while we were on the sidewalk it was decided that instead of another meeting I should be authorized to appoint a small committee to

negotiate further with Linden Street Temple. As a matter of good will, I asked each man who was with us to put up twenty-five dollars to signify his good intentions. A committee was appointed consisting of myself as Chairman, Marcus Solomon, Barnet Levy, Simon Siegel and Isadore Finkelstein.

First, we decided that we should sell the Penn Avenue Synagogue, and while we all knew that it was permissible to sell in order to buy another Shule, we decided, in order to satisfy everybody, to consult the head Orthodox Rabbi of Philadelphia. He gave us permission, in writing, saying that we could sell the Shule at any time if the money was being used for a better place of worship. So we sold the Penn Avenue Synagogue to the late Moses Epstein for six thousand dollars—two thousand cash, subject to a mortgage of four thousand dollars. Mr. Epstein gave us his check, with the understanding that he would not occupy the building until we could make arrangements with Linden Street Temple and make some repairs or alterations, not to exceed a period of six months.

The seventeen men who agreed to buy the Linden Street Temple were as follows: Isadore Finkelstein, A. Goldberg, Marcus Solomon, B. C. Levy, Barnet Levy, Nathan Suravitz, Alexander Grass, Wolfe Rosenberg, Louis Rosenberg, Max Kaplan, Max Blume, A. Schwartz, I. Harrison, Simon Segal, A. B. Cohen, Jacob Schloss, A. L. Shiller.

The following officers were elected: A. B. Cohen, Chairman, I. Finkelstein, Vice Chairman; A. Schwartz, Treasurer; and B. C. Levy, Secretary. I was authorized to go through with the deal with the Linden Street Temple on the terms as explained above—four thousand dollars down and six thousand dollars within five years. The contract as made provided that we could take immediate possession, and make any alterations or repairs whatever, without the consent of the Reform Congregation. Many of those who refused to go along with the Committee of Seventeen at the original meeting now wished to join with us, but we voted not to take them in as a body, but to consider every individual separately.

We thought it would not be advisable to have the Congregation under the name of Montefiore Hebrew School, as we wanted to maintain the closed membership of the Montefiore group in order to carry out our program. We therefore decided to organize a new congregation under the name of Kneseth Israel and take in a selected number of new members. We decided that the new members must pay one hundred dollars, with the privilege of paying fifty dollars down and the balance within two years.

After the Kneseth Israel Congregation was organized, we were pleasantly surprised to receive applications for membership from people who had never belonged to any congregation at all. We took in sixty-two new members, at the one hundred dollar initiation fee, and some of them didn't even take advantage of the two year term, paying the entire amount in cash. Officers of the new Congregation were elected as follows: A. B. Cohen, President; Isidore Finkelstein, Vice-President; Barnet Lehman, Secretary; and A. Schwartz, Treasurer.

Because of the increase in membership, it was necessary to enlarge the seating capacity of the building, and to erect a larger balcony for the women. Plans and specifications for extending the front and enlarging the gallery were prepared by the late architect Albert Ward. The contract was given to the late Edward Williams; the cost, including new electrical fixtures, a new altar or *bimeh,* a new ark for the Torahs, as well as the new front and larger balcony, was $10,500.

I can never forget the wonderful feeling which came over me and our other members when we opened the new Temple for the first time, on the first night of Rosh Hashonah, and we gazed upon our beautiful new place of worship. As I sat in my chair on the *bimeh* and went over in my mind what we had accomplished in five years, I certainly felt proud. Suddenly, as I looked around at the Congregation and the ladies' balcony, I saw something which struck terror into my heart: the ceiling plaster was beginning to crack around the hanging rods which supported the balcony!

When Albert Ward prepared the plans for the gallery,

he provided that it should be suspended by rods hung from the roof, in order to do away with posts and make more room on the main floor. Some of our members didn't like the idea, but the architect insisted that this was the proper way to do it, so I went along with him. Now it appeared that perhaps he had been wrong after all, and that the gallery and perhaps the roof itself were in danger of collapsing —a terrible disaster, with loss of life and limb.

As I sat there and realized the terrible danger which faced us, I thought of having the women leave the gallery immediately, in order to forestall a collapse. However, I could see that if I took such action, it would most probably result in a panic and perhaps cause the very thing of which I was afraid. I could see that no else had noticed the cracking, so I decided to "sweat it out" until services were over. You can imagine the tension which I was under until the last person left the Temple when services were over.

When the immediate danger was over, I still had to solve the problem of what to do, as we had two days of Rosh Hashonah still left, and you can imagine what would happen if I would be forced to keep the women out of the balcony because the building was not safe! I didn't even finish my meal after services, but told my family that I had to go back to the Temple at once. I called Mr. Ward and also the Scranton Building Inspector, Mr. Haines, who was himself an architect. After making an inspection, they decided that the balcony was not safe for use unless supported by posts, from the ground up. I told them that this must be done during the night, so as to be ready for services the following morning, but they said that such a thing was impossible. I replied that there was no such thing as impossible, and that I was going to have it done if I had to stay on the job all night myself.

At ten P. M. we got hold of Henry Gunster of Gunster Brothers, plumbing contractors, and told him we must have iron pipes, heavy enough and long enough, to support the balcony from the ground up, and that they had to be installed that night. When I explained why, he agreed to cooperate. However, the posts which he had proved to be

about twelve inches short of the necessary length. We therefore rounded up bricklayers and had them lay a foundation of bricks high enough to make up the difference in height, while the holes were being cut through the floor, for the posts to extend upwards from the new foundations. We worked the whole night through, and finally by four-thirty in the morning the posts were in place. We then had them painted with a quick-drying aluminum paint, and by five o'clock I was able to leave the Temple and go home to rest.

By nine A.M. I was back in my seat on the *bimeh,* and although I was filled with a wonderful feeling of relief that the building was now safe, and the terrible danger was over, my heart was beating a mile a minute for fear of what people would say when they noticed the new posts, and I would have to explain what I had done. Not only would I be criticized by the people whom I had ignored when they protested about hanging the balcony from the roof, but I was afraid that the Rabbi would censure me for having the work done on the High Holy Days. For this reason I had not taken any of the members into my confidence the night before. However, as time went on, nobody seemed to realize that new posts had been installed. Finally, one of the Trustees came to see me and said that David Schloss would like to change his seat, as a post was in his way. I walked down to Mr. Schloss and asked him if the post had bothered him the evening before. He said: "No, it didn't bother me last night for some reason, but today I don't have enough room."

I realized then that probably no one would even notice our new balcony posts, and resumed my seat on the *bimeh* with thankfulness in my heart that my long night's work was well spent and a terrible tragedy probably avoided.

* * *

In those days there were no kindergartens in Scranton, and we felt that having a kindergarten in each community might help children and parents alike, regardless of religion or affiliation.

After taking the matter up with the School Board, we found that, because of lack of room, No. 36 School could not have a kindergarten, so we proposed to them that we would

be willing to provide space in the vestry room of the Linden Street Temple. This met with the approval of the Board which provided a very capable teacher, Virginia Gulick, and also paid rental of twenty-five dollars a month for the room.

The kindergarten was welcomed by the entire neighborhood, Jewish and Christian alike.

Shule members were accustomed to paying their dues annually so the Congregation were always struggling to meet their monthly obligations. Sometimes many months went by when the Rabbi and Cantor could not get their salaries because no money was available.

In those days, fraternal organizations were very popular, first because the meetings were held in a very orderly manner and second because the members carried insurance of one thousand dollars—five hundred for the member and five hundred for his wife. So I conceived the idea that the Kneseth Israel Congregation should affiliate themselves with the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham. We would gain a lot by it, as dues would come in monthly (unless they paid their dues monthly it would affect the members' life insurance).

The dues would be about thirty-five dollars a year, for the lodge and the congregation. Our assessment to the lodge would be approximately eleven dollars a year and the Congregation would have twenty-four dollars net on which we could certainly get along very well.

My recommendation was accepted and we affiliated ourselves with the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham. As the result our membership increased immediately to one hundred and fifty.

When our Penn Avenue Building was sold to Epstein, it was being used for bottles and other junk and the old Penn Avenue members were very much against this, notwithstanding the fact that the money realized for the buildings was being used to buy the Linden Street Temple.

Something terrible happened on Sunday night, October 6th, 1903. The Penn Avenue building occupied by Epstein for business as well as living was destroyed by fire and two of Epstein's children were burned to death. Of course

the cry was that this was a punishment of G-D for having sold the shule. The Rabbi of Penn Avenue, who did not go along with the Kneseth Israel Congregation, preached that this was an Act of G-D that we sold the shule for a rag shop. The excitement in town was so great against me that I was advised by my friends to leave immediately and accordingly I spent the next week in Wilkes-Barre.

Some of the old members of Penn Avenue, headed by the late Labe Taren, organized a drive to buy from Epstein whatever was left of the Penn Avenue Synagogue. Taren visited all the neighboring towns and he succeeded in raising enough money to rebuild the Penn Avenue Shule.

In 1929 the Linden Street Temple had to use the school rooms for daily services and we were obliged to look for other quarters. On account of some opposition to the name Montefiore, it was changed to the Central Talmud Torah and we obtained quarters in the Y.M.H.A. Building.

The first president of the Central Talmud Torah was A. B. Cohen, followed by Isidore Finkelstein, Samuel Dickstein, Harry Grossinger and the present president, Harry Klein.

Among those pupils who have graduated from the Hebrew School are Maurice Suravitz, Prof. A. J. Segal, Henry Nogi, and other leading members of our community.

THE KEHILLAH

In the Scranton Jewish Community, all charitable organizations were conducted in a very loose way. It was "free for all." If anyone felt that a new organization was needed and if he could get a few people to go along with him, a new organization would be established. The affairs in general, were conducted without any supervision, and one overlapped the other.

In 1914, the following organizations existed in Scranton or were supported by Scranton Jewry:

The Moses Montefiore Hebrew School
The United Hebrew Charities
The Ladies' Aid Society, Central City

The Ladies' Relief Society, Madison Avenue Temple
Scranton Branch, Orphans' Home, Philadelphia, Penna.
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, New York
National Jewish Consumptive Hospital, Denver, Colo.
National Farm School, Philadelphia, Penna.
Institutions in Jerusalem
Institutions in Russia
Talmudical Schools in New York
Erie Orphans' Home
Jewish Consumptive Relief, of Denver, Colo.

I had an idea that we should have only one organization divided into branches to take care of all the needs of the community—local, national and international—and to supervise all branch activities.

It is easy to build a large building when you have a vacant lot, but when the lot selected by you is occupied by small buildings, there is a problem.

In order to form one organization, headed by selected people representing the entire community and responsible to the community, it was necessary to convince the heads of the small organizations of the merits of this plan.

It took almost a year to convince people that the community would be better served by having one organization supervise all activities of our community. Another problem I was confronted with was the cost of maintenance of one organization, so I consented that if a *Kehillah* be established, I would supervise the affairs of the *Kehillah* for one year without any compensation.

I succeeded in getting the consent of people interested in communal affairs to permit me to organize the *Kehillah* on this basis. Even after I got the consent of the leaders to organize the *Kehillah,* I had to overcome some problems of what the duties of the *Kehillah* should be.

One committee after another was appointed to formulate the plans. Finally, a committee consisting of myself, Oscar Kleeman, A. L. Shiller, and F. L. Wormser was appointed to present the plan.

The committee proposed that the *Kehillah* take care of Montefiore Hebrew School and all local charities and also

national organizations which heretofore were supported by individual members of the Scranton community.

It was also proposed that the annual dues which the members of the Scranton community should pay to the *Kehillah* would be in lieu of their dues heretofore paid to individual organizations.

After the plan was accepted, I was instructed to raise a minimum amount which would be required to maintain the *Kehillah* for at least a year. I conducted a drive and approximately ten thousand dollars in cash was raised.

I managed the *Kehillah* for eleven months and we took care of all local needs.

It appears that the name *Kehillah* did not meet with the approval of some people in Scranton and therefore the name was changed to the Jewish Federation and a paid officer was engaged to conduct the affairs of the Federation.

Many changes in the affairs of the Federation have been made in order to meet local needs. The Federation is still in existence and is a member of the Community Chest.

CHAPTER VII

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

My activities in the Zionist movement began when I was still in Europe; there we used to call it the "Lovers of Zion."

When I came to Scranton, the people whom I met were not Zionistically inclined. However, within a year or so of being in Scranton, I managed to get together a group of people to whom Zionism appealed and I organized the group into a Zionist organization carrying the name "Lovers of Zion" (by the way, this was also the name of the first Zionist organization in America).

In 1898, the first Zionist Organization of America was formed with the name of "Federation of American Zionists" under the presidency of the late Professor Richard Gottheil. I attended the first Zionist Conference, held in New York.

I was president of the Scranton Zionist District for many years and I participated in every activity pertaining to Zion.

When the Jewish Colonial Trust was organized, I was actively engaged in selling shares; as in those days five dollars was a lot of money, we arranged to sell the shares on the installment plan.

I attended every Zionist convention and always took an active part in the procedure. I always kept in close contact with the leaders and whenever there was some difficulty, I was always called to New York for consultation.

I remember once when I was called by Isaac Allen, a very prominent lawyer in Brooklyn and a leading Zionist in

those days. The difficulty for which I was called to New York was as follows:

The headquarters for the Jewish Colonial Trust was Yarmelosky's Bank on Canal Street. A girl from the East Side was in charge of the Colonial Trust stock. The president of the Zionist Organization replaced the girl with one who could not speak one word of Yiddish. The East Side Jewish people complained bitterly that whenever they called at the Bank to take up the matter of shares, the girl in charge did not understand their problems.

I was asked by Mr. Allen to go with him to see the President. He told us that the former girl was dishonest and he had a certain responsibility to the Jewish Colonial Trust in London. We told him that he could get another girl from the East Side who could speak Yiddish, but he remarked that the experience he had with the former girl was enough for him. I remember that I said:

Ish Achoda Yechto Vale Kolle Hoado Ikchoff
(For the sin of one person, you want to condemn the entire community)

After a long argument, he consented to let us appoint a girl whom we thought would be honest and we agreed to assume responsibility for her.

The Zionist activities in the United States prior to World War I were to get members, sell stamps for the Jewish National Fund and, primarily, to get organizations and individuals who were to be honored by the community to put their names in the "Golden Book."

The rank and file of the Jewish communities were not Zionistically minded. I remember one instance when Louis Lipsky asked me to see to it that IOBA Order, which was having their convention in Atlantic City, should have its name in the Golden Book.

The late Hyman Luers was a delegate representing Penn Avenue and I was elected to represent Linden Street at the convention. Without mentioning any names of the officials of the IOBA, we called on the Grand Master who was a close friend of mine and asked that the Grand Lodge should appropriate one hundred dollars for the Golden Book. He told me

to see the treasurer of the lodge who was running a famous restaurant on the East Side. When we called on the treasurer and made the request he remarked: "I can't understand why a book should cost one hundred dollars. I can buy the finest gold trimmed book for twenty dollars." We had a difficult time convincing him that it wasn't the book we were after. "We want the Lodge to give one hundred dollars so the name of the Lodge will be inscribed in the Golden Book which is kept in Palestine." After an argument we succeeded in getting the one hundred dollars.

In later years the Scranton Zionist District was ably managed by the following: The late Max Kaplan, who was president for many years, Julius Baer, H. L. Halprin, Samuel K. Mittleman, E. Lester Man, Henry Greenfield, Louis Hollander, and the late M. J. Finkelstein and Sidney Weiss, who did a marvelous job of ably representing our District in the Zionist Organization of America. Later Dr. Harry Golden took over the presidency and Rabbi Simon H. Shoop became Chairman of the Board.

During my connection with the Zionist Organization, I had a lot of inconvenience and was put in a very peculiar position with my bank in Scranton.

In February, 1927, I received a phone call from Louis Lipsky saying that there was a great emergency meeting to be held in Washington and he wanted me to be there.

When I arrived at the meeting, there was a group of fifty or sixty people. Mr. Lipsky explained that the president of the Jewish National Fund had bought some land in Palestine on an option and had divided same in dunems that were sold. He then took the cash from the sales and used it on an option for new land. They needed $50,000 to pay for the first option or all the money paid in would be forfeited. In those days, to raise $50,000 was a great undertaking and after arguing pro and con, there was still no money in sight. I conferred with the late Louis Topkis and we decided to offer ten thousand dollars each providing the rest of the delegates could raise the balance.

The only thing I know I went home with a head-ache

promising to discount a note for ten thousand dollars not knowing whether or not the bank would accept it.

In order to know exactly how to act, I called on the Executive-Vice-President, George Dunham, of the Dime Bank and told him that the Jewish Commonwealth had held a meeting in Washington and a certain amount of money would have to be raised. The delegates present offered to raise the money through their banks. In fact, there were more pledges by the delegates to raise the money so that the whole amount was over-subscribed.

I succeeded with much effort to get the Bank to discount the note. Mr. Dunham was very cool in the beginning not knowing exactly what the Jewish Commonwealth was. But after explaining that it consisted of practically all the Jews of the world, he agreed to discount the note providing that I would endorse same.

In connection with the ten thousand dollar note to be discounted, I received the following communications signed by Louis Lipsky and Samuel Rosensohn:

Feb. 24, 1927.

Mr. A. B. Cohen
Brooks Bldg.
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Sir:

At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Zionist Organization of America, held in Washington on Sunday, Feb. 20th, you agreed to lend $10,000 to the American Zion Commonwealth upon the note of the company, guaranteed by the United Palestine Appeal.

We are, accordingly, enclosing the note of the American Zion Commonwealth, payable to your order for the sum of $10,000, together with a guarantee of the Palestine Appeal. **May we ask you to discount this note at your bank and send the proceeds by check to the order of the American Zion Commonwealth, Inc.?**

We have made the note payable in four months, to facilitate the negotiation in your bank. The American Zion Commonwealth will send its check for one-half of the amount five days before the due date, together with its note for the balance payable four months thereafter. Upon the expiration of the four months the balance will be paid.

Permit us to thank you on behalf of the American Zion Commonwealth and the Zionist Organization of America for your

cooperation and assistance. Your assistance enables the American Zion Commonwealth to put itself on a sound financial basis and helps to maintain the prestige of the Zionist Organization of America, which ultimately must play an important role in the building of the Jewish National Home.

It is a great comfort to us who are doing our utmost for Palestine, to know that the Zionists of America can be counted upon to assist to the limit of their capacity. This was demonstrated by the gratifying response of the members of the Executive Committee at the Washington meeting.

With sincere appreciation, we are

Cordially yours,

Louis Lipsky,
Samuel J. Rosensohn

SJR/W
enc.

This letter was followed by the following resolution:

GUARANTEE TO A. B. COHEN

WHEREAS, it appeared to the United Palestine Appeal that the failure of the American Zion Commonwealth to meet its obligations will greatly hamper and impair the activities of the World Zionist Organization, the Keren Hayesod and the other constituent organizations of the United Palestine Appeal doing work in Palestine, and will seriously interfere with the raising of funds for the United Palestine Appeal, and

WHEREAS, to save the assets of the American Zion Commonwealth and to prevent the interference with the activities in Palestine of the constituent organizations of the United Palestine Appeal, and to insure the proper collection of funds by the United Palestine Appeal in the United States of America, it is necessary for the American Zion Commonwealth to obtain a loan of Five Hundred Thousand ($500,000) and

WHEREAS, A. B. Cohen has been requested with others by the President of the World Zionist Organization, the President of the Zionist Organization of America, and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the United Palestine Appeal, to make this loan to the American Zion Commonwealth, and the Executive Committee of the United Palestine Appeal has by resolution duly adopted, authorized the Chairman of the Executive Committee, on behalf of the United Palestine Appeal, to guarantee the repayment of such loan to the lenders thereof;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE UNITED PALESTINE APPEAL IN consideration of A. B. COHEN, taking part in the loan to the American Zion Commonwealth, to the extent of Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000), the UNITED PALESTINE APPEAL hereby

guarantees to A. B. COHEN, full re-payment of the Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000) so lent to the American Zion Commonwealth, of any renewal or renewals of such loan, on or before October 1, 1927.

UNITED PALESTINE APPEAL
Emanuel Neuman, Chairman
Executive Committee

In connection with the ten thousand dollar note I discounted for the Jewish Commonwealth, I had a lot of trouble, as the Zionist Organization never kept its promise to reduce the note.

When the note fell due, I did not receive the renewal in time and in order to keep the good name of the Jewish Commonwealth and also my own credit, I had to raise cash to pay for the note. When I received the renewal I had to open an account in another bank to discount the note and the proceeds of the note were used to reimburse me for the cash I laid out when I paid for the note.

When the note fell due in the second bank, not having the renewal in time, I had to do the same thing over again: pay for the note and discount the note in the first bank.

Of course, knowing the financial status of the Zionist Organization, I did not blame anyone and took the whole matter calmly.

MY EXPERIENCES AS A DELEGATE TO THE ZIONIST CONGRESS IN VIENNA IN 1925

At the Zionist Congress held in Vienna in August, 1925, the procedure for electing delegates was different than it is today. Delegates to the Congress were first elected to a Zionist Convention held in Washington, D.C., that year.

While I could not write from my memories what led to my election as a delegate, as I was at the time already in Europe, what happened in Washington at the Convention was reported to me as follows:

Delegates representing the Scranton District to the Convention were my son-in-law, E. Lester Man, B. J. Smith and Israel Allen.

To secure my election they affiliated the Scranton delegation with the Philadelphia delegation, headed by Judge Louis Levinthal. The Zionist Scranton delegates appeared before the Philadelphia delegates at their caucus meeting and Mr. Man presented my name to the Philadelphia delegation. The Philadelphia delegation was more than pleased to have my name appear on their list and that finalized my election as a delegate.

During the two months of our trip to Europe it was great hardship for both Mrs. Cohen and myself to have a bath as the bathing facilities in Lithuania in those days were almost non-existant. We had to use daily alcohol rubs to keep ourselves clean.

We finished our Lithuanian trip in the early part of July and from there we went to Carlsbad for a rest. There we met with American and European delegates who were going to the Zionist Congress and while our stay in Carlsbad was in the nature of a vacation, still we used to meet daily with the other delegates to formulate some plan for the Congress. In Carlsbad we met the late William Topkis, who was one of the delegates. The President of Czechoslovakia was there, and he used to arrange to meet with the delegates as often as possible.

I remember that during that period the Vienna *Hackenkreuzer,* a forerunner of the Nazis, were carrying on propaganda against the Zionist delegates. The European delegates were very much alarmed that something terrible might happen to the delegates; the *Hackenkreuzer* said that the delegates would not be safe in Vienna. We, the delegates, who were meeting in Carlsbad, were asked whether it was safe for the others to meet in Vienna or whether we should look for another place. It was the opinion of the Czechoslovakian delegate that we should not be frightened by the propaganda and the leader of the Vienna Jews advised that the Vienna government had promised full protection for the delegates.

I remember that the Congress opened on a Wednesday evening in Koncerten Hall in Vienna. We had arrived in Vienna on Monday. After registering at the Hotel Bristol,

we were told by the management not to leave the hotel after dark as some trouble was expected by organized bandits who threatened to do harm to the Zionist delegates. I remember that the group of delegates registered at the Hotel, obeyed this rule but in the morning we found out that many of the other delegates who disregarded this warning were harmed, particularly the late Rabbi Ebin, who was beaten up and had to be hospitalized for several days.

The procedure of the Congress was a little different from that of the American House of Representatives where every Congressman has a right to take the floor. A procedure whereby the work could be done systematically and efficiently (as the Congress was to last only twelve days) was arranged so that every country which had a certain number of delegates was to organize itself and designate a spokesman for the delegation. We, the American delegation, used to meet every morning to review the procedure of the proceding day and to plan a program for the next session, and a different spokesman was appointed every day for the American delegation.

It appeared that the American delegation was receiving all the honors; practically every committee appointed had as chairman one of the American delegates. I was honored to be chairman of the Colonization Committee. The Committee consisted of about twenty-five delegates from different countries.

In connection with the Colonization Committee I had a peculiar experience. Two Rabbis stopped off in Vienna on their way back from Palestine to see if they could gain admittance to the Congress. The Rabbis called on me to tell me they had a complaint to make against the young men and women of Palestine as they believed that their morals were not up to standard and they asked me to take the matter up before the Congress. I told the Rabbis that no matter how important the matter could be, I could not take it up on the floor as this was not permitted. Not knowing exactly the nature of their complaint, I advised them to write a letter stating their case and to address it to the Congress Committee. As it happened, the complaint was sent to the Colon-

ization Committee, of which I was Chairman. Since every delegate was permitted to speak the language of his choice (Hebrew, German or French), an interpreter was necessary. A young girl, who was able to speak three languages or more, was assigned to my Committee. The letter addressed to us was written in English. My interpreter explained its contents to the delegates.

Since the complaint was made by American Rabbis, I thought I would add something to their case by telling my Committee the effect it would have on the American public if the two Rabbis gave their report of Jewish life in Palestine.

I gave over the chair to the vice-chairman and took the floor. I told the Committee that while I had no knowledge of the complaint submitted, the matter should not be treated lightly as the Jews in America would resent hearing of any institution which they supported having questionable morals. I therefore suggested that this matter be referred to the Palestinian authorities for clarification. One of the delegates, a Palestinian Jew, got up and made the following remarks: "I can understand every language and it is not necessary for me to waste time listening to the interpreter. As far as the complaint of the American Rabbis is concerned, I want to say that I am a Palestinian Jew, born and raised in Palestine, and it appears to me that your Rabbis have a peculiar imagination—seeing young men and women working in the fields in shorts carries their imagination God knows where. I can tell you, Gentlemen, that the Palestinian boys and girls have very high standards and if anything is wrong, it is the fault of your own boys and girls who lately settled in Palestine. If you gentlemen think your golden dollars can control our lives, you are mistaken. Our moral life is being standardized, and if you want to change it, why don't you go there?"

Dr. Weizmann, President of the World Zionist organization, was a British Jew who was trying to inject the British rule that the Prime Minister must have a vote of confidence or otherwise he must resign. Dr. Weizmann asked the Congress to give their approval to his report. The delegates refused to do it, claiming that he would surely be re-elected

and that would be sufficient proof that the Congress has confidence in him. The matter was being discussed pro and con by the delegates and I remember that one day before the Congress closed, Dr. Weizmann refused to open the meeting unless he would receive a vote of confidence.

I was asked by some leaders of the Congress, particularly Dr. Sokolov, to use my influence with the Mizrachi delegates for the vote of confidence. In that way, the meeting could proceed as usual. After negotiations with the Mizrachi delegates, they consented to use their influence with the rest of the delegates to give Dr. Weizmann a vote of confidence, so the meeting continued Saturday afternoon until late Sunday evening, when the Congress adjourned.

CHIEF JUSTICE MAXEY AND THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

About July, 1944, I attended a meeting of the American-Christian Palestine Committee held in Washington, D.C. I invited Thomas Connor, former editor of the *Scranton Tribune* and Richard Little, co-owner of the *Tribune,* as my guests. There, we met Judge John W. Murphy, who was then Congressman from the 11th Pennsylvania district. We all enjoyed the meeting very much.

When the meeting was over we had dinner together and Richard Little asked me if we could have some prominent man to represent Pennsylvania at the American-Christian Palestine Committee. We all agreed that it was a good idea and it was their thought that it should be a prominent Christian from Scranton. Finally, we decided that Judge George W. Maxey would be the proper man. At my suggestion, my Christian friends who were with me called on Judge Maxey but it appeared that, notwithstanding their enthusiasm, they were not able to answer the Judge's question about the work of the Committee.

Next day I received a telephone message from Judge Maxey and when I called at his office he told me that a committee of prominent citizens was trying to interest him in the Zionist movement. Judge Maxey put many questions to me

and one of them was: why are the Jewish people anxious to go to Palestine? After all, they had lost Palestine over two thousand years ago and it has been settled by other nations. Why Palestine, after it has been lost for so long?

It appeared to me that Judge Maxey was very much interested in the Jewish problem. He recognized the fact that a place should be established where Jewish people, fleeing persecution, could go without hindrance. He told me that while he had read so much about the Zionist movement to establish a home-land, he still was very anxious to know more about it. Judge Maxey said that he would be willing to spend as much time as necessary to learn all that he could do about it.

I had to start from the beginning, saying that while it was true the Jewish people had been forced to leave Palestine over two thousand years ago, they had never lost hope of returning. I fact, in their prayers, recited three times daily, they asked to return to Palestine. And while they could not go to Palestine to live, they considered it a great accomplishment to be buried, at least, in the Holy Land.

New movements sprang up with the idea of going to Palestine, and therefore Jewish colonies were established from time to time. In 1896, a new movement was formed by the late Theodore Herzl and the first Jewish Congress was called by him in Basle, Switzerland. Delegates from all over the world attended this Congress and there a movement was started to negotiate with the Sultan of Turkey for terms permitting the Jewish people to establish themselves in Palestine. The movement, while it was universal among the Jewish people, appeared not to gain much headway, and while Jewish people all over the world were very much enthused, no progress was made with the Sultan of Turkey or with other governments for their support.

After World War I, the League of Nations was established. Territories which were considered "no-man's land" were under its jurisdiction. One of these was Palestine, which had been taken away from the Turks.

In 1917 the late Arthur Balfour, who was then foreign

Secretary of the British Commonwealth, issued the famous Balfour Declaration, which reads as follows:

> "I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declarations of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet: His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation."

The Balfour Declaration gained the support of the League of Nations and Palestine was given over to Great Britain as a mandate. Dr. Herzl's idea that Palestine should be declared as a Jewish homeland did not gain much headway because of lack of support from other governments.

I told Judge Maxey all about Dr. Chaim Weizmann who succeeded Dr. Herzl as head of the Zionist movement. I explained that he was born in Lithuania and studied chemistry in Switzerland: about 1908 an international chemists' congress was held in Switzerland and Dr. Weizmann read a paper there. It was a great success and he received an offer to go to the University of Manchester in England.

When Great Britain entered World War I, Dr. Weizmann invented TNT and gave it to the British Government without compensation as his contribution toward the war effort. It has been said that the Balfour Declaration was greatly influenced by this fine gesture.

In 1922, when the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration was celebrated in New York, Dr. Weizmann made this very interesting statement:

> While the Balfour Declaration was officially proclaimed in 1917, I count it from 1907. In that year Arthur Balfour was running for a seat in the House of Parliament. He addressed a political meting in a Jewish neighborhood (at which I was present) and in the course of the address he tried to convey to the Jewish people that the British Government was very much interested in their problems. He said he would like to know why there

were so many objections among the Jewish people to accepting the offer to establish Uganda as a homeland.

"Isn't it better to take Uganda which you can have instead of Palestine which does not meet with the favor of the Arabs?" In addition, Palestine has been neglected—no trees, grass or cultivation and the whole of it filled with swamps, and malaria."

Then Mr. Balfour asked if anyone could answer why the Jewish people still preferred Palestine to Uganda.

(Weizmann told us that before he could look up he was pushed on the platform and it was with words of the people that "here was a man who could give the answer.")

Balfour sized me up and said, "Young man, what is your answer?" I said to Mr. Balfour, "Were you ever in Paris?" He replied that he had been. "How would you compare the beauty of Paris with that of London?" He replied, "Well, there is no question about it, Paris is more beautiful." I then said to Mr. Balfour, "Why don't you move to Paris?" He looked at me smiling good-naturedly and said, "I prefer London because it is my home and Paris is not mine."

I replied: "While I would probably admit that the offer from Great Britain to give Uganda to the Jewish people may be practical, still we prefer Palestine because Palestine is ours."

It is the claim of the Jewish people that the land of Canaan has been given to them by the Lord, and that this is in the record of deeds recognized the world over as the Bible.

Genesis Chap. 13—Verses 12-15.

"Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan and the Lord said unto Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, eastward and westward, for all the land which thou seest to thee will I give and to thy seed forever."

Weizmann's reply to Mr. Balfour answered the question as to why the Jewish people desired Palestine in preference to Uganda. Mr. Balfour said "Young man, I hope that some day I will be in a position to help you realize the dream of the Jewish people to make Palestine their homeland."

It was for these reasons that Dr. Weizmann counted the Balfour Declaration from 1907 instead of from 1917.

From time to time Great Britain, in order to overcome the objections of the Arabs that Palestine should become the

Jewish homeland, sent commissions to get first-hand information of the Palestine situation and to report back to the British Government. One of these commissions, headed by Lord Peale, reported that Palestine should be divided between the Jews and the Arabs. While some thinking Jews were not satisfied with the plan because Palestine is geographically a very small land, the partitioning of Palestine was favored by Great Britain.

The Balfour Declaration was approved by the House of Parliament and any change needed its sanction. The late Lord Derby asked the House of Parliament to approve the report of Lord Peale to partition Palestine. After Lord Derby's speech one Member of Parliament (whose name I cannot recollect) asked "Why do the Jewish people want Palestine after two thousand years? They are not the only people who have lost a country." Lord Derby gave the following answer:

> "According to Blackstone, anyone who, when dispossessed from his home would still visit the old home-stead to see that the premises are kept in good condition, is still considered the owner. The Jewish people, notwithstanding the fact that they lost Palestine over two thousand years ago, pray twice a year for rain. That is an indication that they have not given up Palestine."

When the Jews lost Palestine, one of the lands which received them and gave them privileges, was Babylon; notwithstanding the fact that in Babylon they were established happily they did not forget Palestine as indicated in Psalm 137:

1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy . . .

It appears that of all the arguments I put up to the Judge, the last one appealed the most to him, and he authorized me to announce to the press his willingness to represent the State of Pennsylvania on American Christian Palestine Committee.

On August 2nd, I received a telephone call from Judge Maxey asking to see me in his office where he told me that he had received two letters; one from Mr. Lessing Rosenwald and the other from Mr. Elmer Berger, expressing their opposition to the Zionist movement, for Palestine. Judge Maxey read to me his reply to Mr. Berger, as follows:

"Mr. Elmer Berger
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Berger:

I have your letter of July 31st in reference to my acceptance of the Chairmanship of the Pennsylvania chapter of the American-Palestine Committee.

You are correct in assuming that "only the highest humanitarian motives could have prompted" me to take on this additional burden.

I note your statement as follows:

"The American Council for Judaism, for instance, is emphatically opposed to the latter-day agitation aiming at the conversion of Palestine into a Jewish Commonwealth. The Council does not oppose, of course, the right of Palestinian Jews to create for themselves homelike conditions there. But it strenuously opposes as undemocratic, and hence as un-American, the right of Jews to stamp that country with the religious or racial connotation of their own group, in that way create in the non-Jewish element there the sense of not wholly belonging in their own homeland."

To which Judge Maxey answered Mr. Berger as follows:

I am not concerned with "the Jews stamping" Palestine "with the religious connotation of their own group". I am not interested in the Jewish-Arab problem, as I take it for granted that this problem will after a while be adjusted amicably.

What I am interested in now is keeping a place of refuge open for those Jews in Europe who have seen their brethren and their children murdered by Hitler and Himmler and their Nazi henchmen. I am convinced that Palestine is the best refuge for the downtrodden European Jews, and if I can assist in any way in keeping open Palestine and the roads to Palestine, for the tens

of thousands of Jews who are struggling to escape the cruel fate which Hitler has already imposed on over 3,000,000 Jews, I will feel amply rewarded for all my labors in this undertaking.

If either you or Mr. Rosenwald wish to confer with me at Scranton, you may do so. I doubt that any practical good would result therefrom. If you came here to see me on this matter, I would invite Mr. A. B. Cohen and other local Zionists to meet me at the same time. The only result would be a debate between the Anti-Zionists and the Zionists. No good would be accomplished by that debate.

I have already received several letters from Jews throughout the State thanking me for accepting the Chairmanship of the American-Palestine Committee for the State of Pennsylvania."

Very Truly Yours,

GEORGE W. MAXEY.

I received a photograph from Judge Maxey on November 6, 1944, with this autographed inscription on the bottom:

"To Mr. A. B. Cohen—an unselfish and public-spirited citizen and loyal friend."

I shall always remember the Judge in the same terms.

Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties are located in the Pocono Mountains, in one of the most beautiful spots in Pennsylvania. They are also the center of the anthracite coal regions, and the home of a great many other industries.

In 1778, the people of Luzerne County, which at that time included what is now Lackawanna County, were massacred by the Indians and the population of the entire valley was almost annihilated. A group of men was sent to Rhode Island for assistance, and there were only forty people left holding the fort until relief could arrive. Those forty people, with great courage and sacrifice, did hold out until help arrived, and the spot has ever since been known as Forty-Fort, to commemorate the bravery of the forty who held out against the enemy, in spite of all odds. And if the spirit of Forty-Fort had not been displayed by our early settlers, first against the Indians and later during the Revolutionary War, our great country might not exist today as we know it.

I would like to apply the story of Forty-Fort to the

story of the State of Israel. While we are recounting the practical Zionist movement as starting in the late '80's and early '90's, and calling of the first World Zionist Congress by Dr. Thedore Herzl, we are also taking into account the great contributions of Dr. Chaim Weizmann;

We are thankful to Lord Balfour and the British Govrenment for the Balfour Declaration;

We are proud and appreciative of the action of the United Nations in recognizing the claim of the Jewish people, and in helping to establish the State of Israel in 1948;

However, while we recognize that all of these things have been wonderful achievements, I believe that if it were not for the observance of the Ninth Day of Ab, commemorating the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple;

And if it were not that we traditionally remember Zion in the time of our happiness;

And if it had not been our custom for centuries to leave an unfinished spot over the doorway, as a remembrance of the destruction of the Temple;

And if it were not for the ancient custom of the groom putting ashes on his forehead on his happiest day, as a reminder of Zion;

And if it had not been the custom of our fathers and grandfathers to get up in the middle of the night, to sit on the floor and weep over Zion;

And if our Fathers had not "held the fort" for hundreds of years by praying, by weeping, and by remembering Zion on every occasion,

We would not have had a Theodore Herzl,

We would not have had a Chaim Weizmann,

We would not have had a Ben-Gurion,

We would not have had the Zionist Organizations,

We would not have had the Balfour Declaration,

We would not have had the sympathy and good will of the world,

And finally, we would not have obtained the recognition of the United Nations, and its creation of the free state of Israel.

All this was due to the "Forty-Fort" spirit and the

sacrifices of our forefathers in not forsaking Zion, but stubbornly holding the fort until their dream of centuries became a practical reality.

The story is told that Napoleon once visited a synagogue on the Ninth day of Ab and found all the worshippers sitting on the floor, weeping over Zion. He asked his Lieutenant what it was all about, and was told it was in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, and that they were praying to God for its rehabilitation. Napoleon said, "Tell these people that sitting on the floor and weeping and praying, will never get Palestine back. Let them take the sword and fight for it."

Of course, Napoleon did not understand the psychology behind this particular ceremony. Our people have never expected that by sitting on the floor and weeping, or by the many other ceremonies of remembrance, they could regain Jerusalem. They were merely "holding the fort" for the generations to come, in the hope and belief that the day would surely come when the Jews of the world would have their homeland restored to them once more.

During the struggle for Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel 10 years ago, many questions have been asked, and are still being asked: "Why do the Jewish people want Palestine? Isn't it a fact that before the Jewish people established themselves in Palestine, some other nations had occupied the land of Canaan, and that after the Jewish people were forced to leave the land of Israel, someone else has occupied the land? The question is asked, why the Jewish people have been so stubborn for many centuries, maintaining the hope of going back to Israel, even when they were offered other territories in which to establish themselves.

I would like to answer these questions in the following manner: The Jewish people have chosen the land of Canaan which was given to them by the Almighty, with the command to live according to the Torah. Notwithstanding the fact that they were forced to leave Israel twice, still they could not acclimate themselves to any other mode of living, since the Torah has prescribed for them the mode of living. It says,

"You shall live with, in order not to die." In other words, the instructions of the Torah were that the children of Israel should live according to it, so that Judism would not die. Therefore, while they were in exile, they could not accustom themselves to another mode of life or another religion.

As to the question, why the land of Canaan, and why they were forced to leave? It is just like a person having a deed to a piece of land, but with the deed having certain reservations, as to how the owner shall occupy same, and the purpose for it, so that if the owner of this piece of land violates the deed, the seller shall have the right to cancel the deed, and force the occupier to give up possession.

The Jewish people received a deed to the land of Canaan from the Lord, as described in Genesis: Chapter 12, verse 7, which reads as follows: "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land. And he built there an altar unto the Lord, who had appeared unto him."

Genesis, Chapter 13, verse 15:	"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever."
Genesis, Chapter 15, verse 18:	"On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed Have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."
Genesis, Chapter 17, verse 8:	"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou sojournest, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

In Chapter 15, verse 18, the Lord gave the deed to Abram describing the Territory *from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river of Euphrates.* Same being recorded in the record of deeds, the Bible, and recognized by all nations of the world.

But in the deed there were some restrictions as described in the Fifth Book of Moses, DEUTERONOMY, the devotion

to God and the reward of same, also giving the instructions of how to live in the land and if not, what the consequences would be as described in Chaper 11, verse 17.

Deuteronomy: Chapter 11, verse 13: "And it shall come to pass, if ye will hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love thy Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Chapter 11, verse 14: "That I will send rain for your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thy oil."

Chapter 11, verse 15: "And I will give grass in thy field for thy cattle; and thou shalt eat and be satisfied."

Chapter 11, verse 16: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them."

Chapter 11, verse 17: "(For) then the Lord's wrath will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens that there will be no rain, and the land will not yield her products; and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth unto thee."

The Jewish people occupied the land of Israel for 900 years. Then they violated the terms of the deed as described in the Bible, and were forced to leave. After being in Galuth for 70 years, they returned from Babylon to the land of Israel, which they again occupied for over 400 years. However, it was the same as before the destruction of the first Temple. Their conduct was not according to the Bible, and again they were forced to leave. After being in exile for over 2,000 years, and realizing through their suffering what they had lost because of not living up to the Torah as prescribed, they were hoping and praying that, with the Help of the Lord, they could go back to the land of Israel.

In 1947 they were granted, through the United Nations, the right to establish themselves as an independent Nation. Through their Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, a declaration of independence was issued, proclaiming that the children of Israel were to occupy Israel once more as their own land.

If the children of Israel had lived the Jewish life as the people of Israel are observing it today, perhaps they would never have had to be in Galuth for 2,000 years. Let us hope that they may always observe the conditions of the deed, as prescribed by God, so that the New State of Israel may live for many centuries to come.

CHAPTER VIII

THE B'NAI B'RITH

The B'nai B'rith is one of the oldest fraternal organizations in America, organized and conducted by German Jews all over the country. One of the advantages of membership, until lately was sick benefits.

The B'nai B'rith was doing splendid work and during the late 90's and early 1900's, when the immigration from Europe was very heavy, it was active in helping the new-comers. In the late 1900's there was an organization in New York called the Industrial Removal Office. The purpose of this organization was to see that the new immigrants should not all settle in New York City but should go to different parts of the country.

Money for doing this work was supplied by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. The work was done in a very systematic way and through the B'nai B'rith men and women were appointed to help take care of immigrants in their localities.

The late F. L. Wormser, who was district President #3 of B'nai B'rith, was asked to organize Scranton and he interested me in bringing to Scranton some of the new-comers. I was very anxious to do this work and more than fifty families came to Scranton. Employment was obtained for these people upon arrival but the trouble in Scranton, and in other communities, for that matter, was that the people involved were not interested in a New York committee telling them what to do and, therefore, we found that after

staying in Scranton a short time, they asked to be sent to another community where they had friends or relatives. In cases of this kind we were authorized to help in every way, even to paying for transportation.

Because of my affiliation with the late F. L. Wormser in helping the immigrants, I was elected a member of B'nai B'rith and if my memory serves me right I was the only member of that organization who was himself an immigrant. I was elected vice-president and also a trustee in one year, which was considered a great achievement.

I wish to relate an incident of being told to "go where I belong."

The Montefiore Hebrew School depended upon private contributions and at one meeting of the B'nai B'rith I asked that they contribute $200 toward the educational fund of the Hebrew School. I was told that the money of the B'nai B'rith was for charity, not education, and therefore they could not grant my request. At a later meeting, the Lodge received a letter from New York asking them to contribute $300 to the Hebrew Educational Alliance. Without any hesitation, the request was granted. I asked why it was that they refused to donate $200 to a local educational institution and I was told that the local Hebrew School was not a charitable organization. When I asked how it was that they granted $300 to a similar institution in New York, it led to a long argument. I asked why New York was entitled to more than Scranton and I remarked that the Jews from Penn Avenue maintain their own independence and are not influenced by outsiders. To this I was told: "If you don't like it, go back to Penn Avenue." That I considered my expulsion from the B'nai B'rith Lodge.

All of this I am writing from memory but the other day someone brought me an old Minutes Book from the B'nai B'rith and it substantiated this story. It noted that I was initiated in September, 1900; elected a warden in January, 1901; elected as vice-president in June, 1901; and as trustee in November, 1901. I found that I still belonged to the Lodge in 1903 through the Kishinev troubles. The minutes were written in longhand and it was difficult to find exactly when

I was told to go to Penn Avenue, but it is true nevertheless.

After I left, I was asked by F. L. Wormser to continue my work of helping immigrants settle in Scranton. I told him I would be happy to do it, but not under the auspices of the B'nai B'rith. Mr. Wormser agreed that we should work independently and it was decided that I should go to New York to make arrangements whereby all communications be directed to us instead of the B'nai B'rith Lodge.

While I was in New York, I made new arrangements to rectify some mistakes which the New York office probably did not know about. Heretofore, the Industrial Removal Office had been sending immigrants to Scranton or other communities without consulting the immigrant himself as to where he actually wanted to go; therefore we were advised that if he was not satisfied to stay in Scranton we should send them to another community and the New York office would reimburse us.

I found that in many cases the immigrants would cash in their train tickets and we did not know what became of them. After talking matters over with the officers of the Industrial Removal Office, I proposed to them that if one of the immigrants wished to go to another community he would have to give good reasons for doing so before we would give him a railroad ticket; that we should try to communicate with any relatives or friends to make certain they would take care of him, even then, we would not buy railroad tickets but make arrangements with the railway companies to have the ticket agent transport the passenger to the city designated. Before I made the proposal to the New York office, I talked it over with the passenger agent in Scranton who was satisfied with the arrangement. The New York office was very pleased with our advice and arrangements.

I find that the B'nai B'rith was not active from 1917 to 1922; no meetings were held and no minutes reported. Accordingly, from the minutes, Joseph Harris was elected the first president at the reorganization meeting in 1922. New activities started in the reorganization period under

the administration of Grand Masters Munsky, Goldman and the present Grand Master, Philip Klutznick.

The Order of B'nai B'rith today is an important factor in Jewish life all over the country. Hillel Foundations have been organized in practically all colleges and universities to help young men and women continue their Jewish life.

The Scranton Branch today is functioning as a model B'nai B'rith group of which any community can be proud. One of its functions is maintenance of an anti-defamation program and another is a charity fund which is non-sectarian; it is also extremely active in the Israel Bond Drive and many other Jewish activities.

CHAPTER IX

REMINISCENCES OF MY EARLIER DAYS

One day my daughter Celia came home for lunch from Public School No. 36 almost in tears. I asked her what the trouble was and she said that the teacher, Miss DeGraw, told the class that the Jews were liars and thieves. I could scarcely believe that a teacher would make a remark of that kind in front of a class of children.

I asked Celia to give me the names of some pupils in her class. She named a dozen children who had heard that statement. Among them were Celia Luers (now Celia Appelbaum), James Gardella and Frank Murphy; they lived in our neighborhood and I decided to speak with them.

To my astonishment, after interviewing the children, I found that, although they did not all use the words thieves and liars, some such statement had been made by Miss DeGraw. One child said that she told them the Jews were stealing money and putting it in their stockings; another said that she told them the Jews never told the truth, and so forth. Owing to the fact that they were all between the ages of six and seven and a half, it was my conclusion that while they did not repeat the exact words of Miss DeGraw, she had used some words of great offense to the children and to our people.

In those days there were twenty-one wards in Scranton and every ward elected one of its own members to the School Board. The member from the 8th Ward was a prominent

Jew. He advised me not to make too much fuss about the matter as it might create some trouble with the School Board. I told him that it was not my intention to cause any trouble, but if there was any truth in the matter, she was not fit to be a teacher. He asked me whether I had made any inquiries of Mrs. Levy who resided at 338 Franklin Avenue or of Joseph Bloch who lived on Linden Street. I told him that none of the children of those families were in Miss DeGraw's class. However, he told me that as far as he was concerned he would not take this matter up with the School Board as he did not have too much confidence in the statements of Penn Avenue children.

I called on Attorney Nathan Wittawer who, at that time, was the only Jewish lawyer in Scranton. Mr. Wittawer considered the case very seriously, but he told me that inasmuch as this was a Jewish problem and he was a Jewish lawyer, he preferred that I take the case to another lawyer.

In order not to assume responsibility for the entire affair, I called upon the parents of the children who attended that class. They all told me that their children had made the same complaint and they authorized me to take the necessary steps for a thorough investigation to see that any anti-Semitism be eliminated from the public schools.

With this authorization I again called upon Mr. Wittawer and asked him to recommend a lawyer who might be willing to take the case. He suggested the late E. C. Newcomb, who in later years became Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. I told Mr. Newcomb the facts of this case and he was very much alarmed to think that such conditions prevailed in the public schools. He told me he would be more than pleased to take the case and, knowing that we had no funds, was willing to do it on principle, without charging anything.

Mr. Newcomb conferred with the School Board which agreed to have the Superintendent of Schools, the late Mr. George Howell, meet with Mr. Newcomb to take testimony from the children.

Meanwhile the children in Miss DeGraw's class refused to attend school, and pupils from other classes refused to

go to school until the matter was settled. The consequence was that the majority of pupils in No. 36, being of Jewish parentage, were practically on strike. The newspapers got hold of the story and made a suggestion that if the matter was true the teacher should be punished; if there was no truth in the matter, then A. B. Cohen should be punished for creating a disturbance.

Mr. Newcomb and the Superintendent of Schools took testimony from the children and practically every child mentioned the fact that Miss DeGraw had made remarks of that nature. When the matter became public, the newspapers demanded that an open hearing be held as they wanted to know all the facts.

The hearing took place in the Council Chambers at City Hall and I was subpoenaed as the plaintiff. I remember that the first question asked by the President of the School Board, the late B. T. Jayne, was whether or not I knew that education was compulsory and anyone who interfered with it was liable, and why did I call a strike in No. 36 school?

My answer to his question was that I did not call a strike—it was only that the parents refused to send their children under these conditions.

Then Mr. Newcomb asked me whether our people were offended by the remarks made by the teacher. I told him we were not offended by the remarks made by Miss DeGraw as we did not consider her a sufficiently important person; however, we would have taken the same steps if she made the remark that the Irish or Polish or Italians were thieves and liars as we believe that our children were being sent to school to be taught the democratic way of life instead of anything creating prejudice.

The entire School Board was present and the question was raised as to whether Miss DeGraw could be examined (she was not represented by a lawyer); they did not want the School Solicitor to take part in the questioning as it might involve the entire Board.

Among the spectators was the late David J. Reedy, one of the most prominent lawyers of the Lackawanna Bar. He

got up and said he was willing to represent Miss DeGraw in order to find out the truth of the matter and he was willing to defend Miss DeGraw if there was no truth in the statements made by the children.

Mr. Newcomb started questioning her as to what had happened on the day she was accused of making the statements. She said, "Well, it was about 11:00 a.m. when the principal called me to his office and I said to the children, 'Now look here, children, I am going to Mr. Fuller's office and I will be back soon. I want you to study and not to waste any time as wasting time means stealing time and you children, especially you Jewish children, who have had a better religious education, were told not to steal.' "

Mr. Newcomb then said to her, "Now, we think that was a terrible remark to make, Miss DeGraw. How do you know that the Jewish children had better religious training?"

Miss DeGraw said, "I had experience before I was teaching in No. 36 school. I taught children from another section of the city where there were only a few Jewish children and I found that they had better religious training than the rest."

Of course, her remarks made a big sensation and the people thought that this was a way for her to get out of the situation.

Mr. Newcomb asked for a recess for a few minutes as he wanted to consult with me. After taking me to another section of the chambers, he asked me what my intentions were now. I said, "Well, it is your case and I ask your advice."

He said to me, "I took the case, as I told you in the beginning, on general principles. My feeling in this case is that if she would have made the remark that the Germans were thieves and liars, I would have taken the same interest as I have taken in your case. But after listening to the statement from Miss DeGraw that, from her experience, German children had better religious training, I would be satisfied to rest the case."

When we went back to the hearing, he turned to Miss DeGraw and told her that in the future she should not make

any statements that could be misconstrued by any of the pupils. The case was adjourned after being applauded by the people assembled.

The next morning Miss DeGraw was dismissed from her position.

I called a meeting of the parents of the affected children and told them is was my opinion, after the remarks made by Miss DeGraw, it would be our duty to see that she was reinstated as such an act would create a liberal attitude among our friends. Accordingly, a petition was prepared and signed by all the parents of the children from the class, asking the Board to reinstate Miss DeGraw and this was done.

BILLY SUNDAY AND THE REFORM RABBI

Billy Sunday was a prominent baseball player, a very powerful man who gave up the ball field and established himself as an evangelist. He visited Scranton in March, 1914, and built a Tabernacle on North Washington Avenue with a capacity of five thousand or more people. He spoke so convincingly that he could do most anything with his audience.

On one Saturday, there was a Bible march for Billy Sunday. It was estimated that there were approximately ten thousand in the line of march. There were rumors in town that the ministers in Scranton were not very happy about his activities, as people would rather go to the Tabernacle than attend church.

Rabbi B of Madison Avenue Temple was invited by Dr. Payne, the minister of the Unitarian Church, to deliver a sermon opposing Billy Sunday's lectures on the Bible. Rabbi B, in the course of his address, made the following remark: "The Bible is an immoral Book and I cannot understand why the postal authorities permit it to go through the mail."

The press took issue with Rabbi B., saying "The Jews do not recognize the New Testament. Now comes one of the Rabbis and preaches against the Old Testament. In what do the Jews believe?"

I was president of the Linden Street Temple which was strictly Orthodox. I called on the president of the Reform

Temple and asked him to make a statement to the press saying they, the Reform Jews, disagreed with the statement of their Rabbi. He resented our interference, claiming it was not our affair. I told him that if the Reform Congregation would not come out with the statement to the press condemning Rabbi B. for his talk at the Unitarian Church, we, the Orthodox Congregation, which comprised 90 per cent of the Jewish population, would take the matter into our own hands. Of course, the Reform Congregation resented this very much and did its utmost that we should not come out with a statement to the press.

The late Samuel Samter, who was probably the most prominent man among the Reform Jews in Scranton, called on me asking what we intended to do. I told him that we proposed to call a mass meeting, vigorously protesting against the remarks made by Rabbi B. Mr. Samter asked me whether we would have any resolutions adopted and what they would say. I told Mr. Samter that we would be willing to appoint him chairman of the Resolution Committee and we would like to hear what he would have to say about Rabbi B.'s statement. Of course, he declined my invitation. A protest meeting was called at the Linden Street Temple. There was a capacity audience—not even standing room. The late Mr. Friedlander, a teacher in the high school, and the late R. L. Levy, one of the most prominent attorneys in Scranton and a man of high standing among the Reform Congregations, attended the meeting. Both men were there to defend the Rabbi. They asked for the floor and I invited them to the platform. Mr. Friedlander was the spokesman. He said, "We are living in an age of free speech and free press and we should not condemn anyone for expressing his thoughts."

My answer was that if anyone of our judges would say before a public gathering that he does not believe in law and order he would certainly be asked by the Governor to resign his position or he would be removed . As a private citizen, he has a right to express his thoughts, but as a judge, he must believe in law and order. As a private citizen, Mr. B. could express his thoughts about the Bible, but as RABBI B., he must believe in the Bible or resign.

Resolutions were adopted condemning Rabbi B. and asking the Reform Congregation to demand his resignation. The following week the Rabbi of Wilkes-Barre, the late Rabbi Salzman, was called in by the Reform Congregation for a consultation. It was not revealed what transpired behind closed doors, but Rabbi B. resigned.

LAKE LINCOLN

In 1906, J. Benjamin Dimmick was elected Mayor of Scranton. Mr. Dimmick was considered one of the finest men in the city of Scranton. He was a sound business man who always looked out for the welfare of the community. He was a manufacturer and a banker.

I was induced by the late Major Warren, father of Everett Warren, to give my support to Mr. Dimmick; I became very much interested in his personality and his attitude toward the welfare of the community. I therefore gave him my full support and conducted an extensive campaign in the 16th Ward to elect Mr. Dimmick as Mayor of Scranton.

During campaign time Mr. Dimmick pledged to do everything in his power to take care of matters important to the community. He suggested that a committee be formed to report to him the most pressing necessities of communal life in Scranton.

After he was elected, a committee headed by the late Alfred Connell, Frank Hagen and myself was organized and instructed to make a survey and report to the Mayor on the city's greatest needs for the benefit of our community. Mr. Connell asked me, together with Hugh Dawson, J. G. Simmons, Harry Connolly (of Connolly & Wallace), and the late William Hagen (of Hagen & Wagner) to make a survey and report back to the Mayor.

After meeting several times, we decided to tell the Mayor that, owing to the fact that there were no river facilities for bathing and most of the poor people did not have the convenience of bathrooms, an artificial lake should be

created in a place suitable and convenient for the community.

The Mayor referred this matter to the city engineer, the late Mr. Blewitt, who suggested that an artificial lake could be built in Nay Aug Park. After plans for this project were drawn up, an estimated cost of $11,500 was adopted by the Committee. The question then was how to obtain this money. The City Council would not agree to appropriate any money for the construction of an artificial lake as the taxpayers would not stand for it. Therefore, it was suggested that this amount could be raised from public subscriptions.

Chairman Alfred Connell appointed me, with Hugh Dawson and William Hagen, to work out a plan for raising the money. For this, we needed various methods and a committee of about fifty members was appointed. We held tag days and house to house collections and finally, after two years, the money was raised and a contract was let to the late Peter Stipp to excavate for a lake at Nay Aug Park.

I remember that about early in 1909, at a meeting, it was reported by the contractor that the Lake would be ready for dedication the early part of June of that year and it was therefore decided to hold a public dedication on the Fourth of July.

At a meeting held the latter part of April one of the members of the Committee mentioned the fact that the 4th of July would fall on a Sunday and therefore it would not be possible to hold a public celebration that day. Everyone agreed to this and thereupon a motion was made to have the dedication on Saturday instead of Sunday. Among the members of the Committee was Otto Rice who afterwards left for Germany. Mr. Rice was older than I; I remarked to him that he should mention it would not be fairer to celebrate on Saturday than on Sunday. Mr. Rice would not consent to make any remarks on this subject; finally I rose and addressed the Chairman, explaining that while it would not be proper to have a public celebration on Sunday, as the feelings of the Christian people would be hurt, by setting the date back to Saturday, the Jewish people would be offended. I felt rather nervous when I got up, but after I was through I

felt relieved—but did not expect that anything would come of what I had said.

To my great surprise, the Rector of St. Luke's Church, the late Israel Rogers, who later became Bishop of Erie, addressed the Chair, stating that "he would move a vote of thanks to Mr. Cohen as we could have committed a crime by celebrating on Saturday while we objected to celebrating on Sunday," and therefore he "would also move that the celebration take place on Monday." This was passed.

I remember that after the meeting, Chairman Connell said to me, "You displayed a great deal of nerve by getting up to raise such a question and probably you didn't expect to have Rev. Rogers come to your assistance. I, personally, fully agree with you and am glad that this matter has been settled in a satisfactory manner." He also said, "To show my appreciation, I will ask Harry Connolly, who is going to be the Grand Marshal of the Parade, to have you as his first aide."

It was the most difficult assignment I had. The march was to start from Lackawanna, corner of Franklin Avenue, and I had to go on horseback to inform all the divisions where we should meet. Because of the noise of the music and the drums, my horse was wild; however, I managed to bring all the divisions in line of march.

Our reward was that Lake Lincoln was built to the satisfaction of the entire community.

THE REFORM MEMBERS OF MADISON AVENUE TEMPLE HAD THEIR HATS ON DURING CHANUKAH SERVICES

An incident worth mentioning happened when members of the Reform Temple on Madison Avenue consented on Chanukah to have their hats on when the late Rabbi Anspacher was praying over the Chanukah candles.

This episode was as follows: I remember that it was on a Saturday night when the late B. Moses and Sol Goldsmith, president and vice-president of the Madison Avenue Temple, called on me asking that all of our officers, teachers and

children join them in celebrating Chanukah at their Temple. I asked them how it was that they wanted to show their children and our children that we were all alike and that there was no difference between the two factions. I disagreed with the reasons given to me and I told them that when they occupied Linden Street Temple they were surrounded only by Jews and they never felt like making a fuss over Chanukah, but now that they moved to Madison Avenue among the Gentiles and were surrounded by three churches they had to follow Jewish style and custom. The Christians were celebrating Christmas—entertaining and feeding poor children—and since this particular year Chanukah was on the same day as the Christmas holiday they thought it would be a good idea to do the same as their Christian neighbors. But since they did not have enough poor children of their own, they thought that they would borrow our children to be stylish. I told them that while it was true that our children would not have ice cream and cake on Chanukah, pumpernickle and herring would be good enough for them.

This matter was carried to the members of the Montefiore Hebrew School and some of our own people disagreed with my argument. On the contrary, they thought it was a great honor to be invited by the Reform Jews. However, after arguing pro and con, the matter was left in the hands of a small committee consisting of Isadore Finkelstein, Aaron Goldberg and myself.

When they called on Monday night for an answer, we told them that while we appreciated very much the honor of being invited to have a united prayer in their Temple, their reason—that they were anxious to show their children and ours that there was no difference—would not work. On the contrary, it would be a great embarrassment to our teachers to explain to the children the next day why the Rabbi and members of Madison Avenue Temple were praying over Chanukah candles without hats. We did not believe this was the time to explain to our children the difference between the Reform and the Orthodox; let them decide for themselves when they grew up.

However, if they were sincere in having us in their

Temple, we would suggest to them that they have the Rabbi and members put on their hats. When they heard that, they were thunderstruck. They thought it a *h*—— of a nerve to make that suggestion. In fact, they came back and said: "Suppose you were inviting us and we would ask you to take off your hats, would you do it? Our answer was that we were certain we would not do it and therefore you don't have to do it either if you don't want to. However, you are forgetting the difference between our request to put your hats on and your request for us to take our hats off. It is no crime for you people to put on your hats. In fact, when we took over the Linden Street Temple we found there prayer shawls, skull caps and even *tfilin*. However, asking us to take our hats off is asking us to commit a crime under Jewish law.

They gave in to our request and the Rabbi and all the male members put their hats on.

A coincidence was that the other day when I was talking to Dr. Milton Rosenberg about old times, he remembered that when he was one of the pupils of the Montefiore Hebrew School all the males in Madison Avenue had their hats on that Chanukah.

The outcome of this incident was remarkable. Madison Avenue people took a different attitude toward our people and recognized the fact that we were not the type of people they thought we were; they recognized that we had honor and knew how to defend our rights whenever called upon.

KISHINEV ORPHANS

After the Kishinev Massacre in 1903, a committee was organized to care for the orphans who remained there. The committee appealed to various groups in the United States for aid and cooperation.

Because the orphans were not infants but ranged from eight to twelve years of age, it was difficult to find homes for them. We finally succeeded in getting Julius Fried to consent to take one orphan boy, but instead of one, the committee sent two. Upon asking the New York committee

why they sent two boys instead of one, they replied that the boys were brothers and should not be separated.

Mr. Fried did not want to take both boys and sent one back to me. I succeeded in placing him with a family by the name of Berger. Mr. Berger, himself, was one of the immigrants who settled in Scranton through our efforts. However, after the Berger family kept the boy a week, they brought him back claiming he was unmanageable—continually fighting with the neighbor's children.

My late wife and I decided that since we had only one boy of our own, we would take this orphan, whose name was Isidore, but he really was so scandalous in his behaviour that it was impossible to manage him. I remember that one night about eleven o'clock, the officer on the beat, Tom Gemmel, asked me to try to get his night-stick back from Isidore. Officer Gemmel was a very kind man and was very well-liked by children. He claimed that Isidore had been fooling with him, snatched his club and ran off with it. It might sound like a joke, but Officer Gemmel claimed that if he went back to Headquarters without his club, he would be fired.

I had difficulty in finding Isidore and getting the club, and after that I called New York to explain that it was impossible to keep the boy in my home and asked to be relieved of him. They advised me to put Isidore on the train and said someone would meet him at the station.

Our community had four local orphans but no orphanage so we decided to contact New York and Philadelphia orphanages to see what arrangements could be made for these four orphans.

I went to New York and asked Dr. Waldman, who was manager of the Industrial Removal Office, to introduce me to the manager of the New York orphanage. Dr. Waldman was kind enough to go with me to the orphanage, and after talking to the superintendent, we were told that the New York institutions were being subsidized by the city and could not accommodate orphans from Pennsylvania.

While I was talking to the superintendent, he asked me if I knew a man from Scranton by the name of A. B. Cohen.

I asked why. The superintendent said that they had a boy in the home who was a son of A. B. Cohen, and was very hard to manage, and that he intended to contact Mr. Cohen to inquire how the boy was trained. I told the superintendent that I was A. B. Cohen and that the boy in the institution was not mine and explained exactly the connection I had with him. He sent for the boy and I recognized him immediately as Isidore.

It appeared that when the committee placed him in the New York orphanage, the boy took my name and his real name was never furnished.

MY TROUBLE WITH THE PENN AVENUE GROUP

Owing to the fact that the members of Linden Street and Penn Avenue were always antagonistic to each other, I was always in the middle. One of the matters causing me much trouble reminds me of the old story of how, over an argument about a rooster and a hen, the city of Tur Malco was destroyed.

I bring up this fact because I had trouble over the question of whether a certain hen was fit to eat or not. I remember that one day a woman by the name of Mrs. Kabatchnick stopped at the front of my house with the remark, "Thank the Lord, as long as it is *kosher*". I asked her what it was all about. She said that she had a very fat chicken and there was a little trouble with her wing, but the Rabbi said it was *kosher,* and she opened the paper where the chicken was wrapped and asked me whether I wanted to see it. I wasn't interested, but after she opened the paper and I looked at it, I found a big hole under the wing that was full of pus and it looked to me as if the entire body of the chicken was poisoned. Unwillingly, I examined the chicken and she said to me, "It is a fine chicken, isn't it?" I said, "Maybe it is, but still I wouldn't eat it." She didn't like my remark and she went home and told her husband that A. B. Cohen said the chicken was *trafe.* In those days there were two factions in the city between the Penn Avenue Synagogue and the Linden Street Temple, and the Rabbi

of the community represented Penn Avenue Synagogue (where Mr. Kabatchnick was a member).

It didn't take long for the Penn Avenue people to sound the alarm that I was interfering in Jewish law and whenever the Rabbi said *kosher,* I said *trafe.* This incident made a lot of trouble for me; people criticized me for interfering in matters that belonged to a Rabbi and not to a layman.

I remember that the late Marcus Solomon called at my home and asked me why I tried to interfere in matters that didn't concern me. I told him I didn't say the chicken was *trafe,* I merely said that I wouldn't eat it. The fact of the matter is that poison is not *trafe* but nobody would eat poison either and it was my opinion that the chicken was full of poison and therefore I said I wouldn't eat it.

Marcus Solomon took the trouble to call on the Kabatchnicks and examined the chicken and he was astonished that the Rabbi would permit a chicken in that condition to be designated as *kosher* and fit to eat. He took the chicken to the Rabbi and he showed him the condition of it. The Rabbi was also very much disturbed, claiming that he saw the chicken on Monday and there was just a little trouble with the wing and the chicken was *kosher* as the wing was not broken. However, Mrs. Kabatchnick kept the chicken from Monday until Thursday, when it was killed by a shochet who didn't examine it and it was the opinion of the Rabbi that the chicken was not in that condition when he saw it on Monday. In fact, he called me up and praised me for having the courage to give my opinion about the chicken.

This was one of those incidents which caused me a little trouble in the beginning, but ended happily for everyone.

MAYOR JOHN VON BERGEN

In 1909, I was honored by the late Mayor John Von Bergen in receiving an appointment as chairman of the City Board of Assessors. While this is not an important matter to write about, something happened which caused me very much embarrassment in answering questions asked me by the Mayor.

The Mayor was inaugurated on a Thursday, the day before our Passover, and he instructed all the committee chairmen to meet with him in City Hall on the next day which was Passover Day.

I felt that on such an important holiday the Mayor would excuse me from attending the meeting so I attended services in the Temple on the first and second days.

When I called at City Hall on what we call the half-holiday, the late Dan Watkins, who was secretary of the Board, told me that the Mayor called me many times as he did not want to have the cabinet meeting without all chairmen present.

The last time he called, he was very angry and he left orders that I should call at his office immediately. I felt a little nervous meeting him as I did not know how he would take my reason for being absent. But of course, I had to face the music whether it be sweet or otherwise. I asked the Mayor's secretary, the late Wallace Moser, how the Mayor felt today. He said he was angry because I did not attend the meeting; however he told me to go up to see him immediately. When I called on the Mayor, whose office was on the first floor, (the city assessor's office was on the third), here was the conversation:

The Mayor said, "Are you tired of the office?"

I said, "No, I am not tired. In fact, I haven't started yet."

The Mayor asked, "Why? Don't you remember that I asked every cabinet member to meet with me as soon as possible and on account of your being absent, the meeting was delayed?"

I said, "Mayor, I don't know how you will take this. You know the last couple of days we had very important holidays, Passover, so I thought you wouldn't mind if I would miss the meeting and attend Temple service."

The Mayor looked at me and said, "By the way, you have a place of business on Lackawanna Avenue. Was it open?"

"I said, "Mayor, will you permit me to explain myself? I want to say that I did not have the opportunity to thank you for the kindness bestowed upon me in appointing me as

Chairman of the Board. I will ask you to accept my sincere thanks.

"You will permit me to answer your question about why my store was open although I did not attend my duties as Chairman of the Board of Assessors as you requested. I know that to qualify for chairman of an important office a man must possess certain qualities:

"1. He must be a Republican, and while I consider myself a qualified Republican, still I know there are a good many Republicans in our city more qualified than I.

"2. The man must know all about real estate. While I do know about real estate, still I know there are a great many more expert than I. But in your selection of me as Chairman of the Board—finding that I have passed the two qualifications of first, being a Republican, and second, a real estate man—you had in mind probably that the man whom you would appoint must have a third qualification—that of being a Jew, in appreciation of the loyalty shown to you by the Jewish people when you ran for Mayor. So my explanation is, if you ask why my store was open during the holiday and still I did not attend the meeting at City Hall on account of the holiday, I want to say that in Lackawanna Avenue I am A. B. Cohen, the jeweler. In City Hall, I am A. B. Cohen, the Jew. Therefore, I took advantage of my third qualification."

The Mayor looked at me and smiled. "Did you have the answer in your pocket before you came in?"

I said, "When you tell the truth, you don't have to be prepared."

The Mayor said, " Your explanation is accepted, and you may also apply your third qualification to all of the Jewish holidays."

CHAPTER X

PLAYGROUNDS AND RECREATION CENTERS

In 1906, the late Mr. Jackson, Executive Director of the Y.M.C.A., called on me one day and explained the necessity of having some playgrounds for the children, especially during school vacations. He told me that the children, not having a place to play and not knowing how to play, were fighting in the streets and therefore he thought we should have playgrounds in different sections of the city where they could play mornings and afternoons during school vacations under the supervision of competent leaders.

This appealed to me very much but the question was how to organize and where we could get the money. I interested the late R. E. Weeks, William Hagen, Col. Hitchcock, and Walter Hill, Sr. We all agreed on the necessity of having playgrounds.

But in order to interest people and to show them the value of the idea, we decided to have one playground to demonstrate the necessity and value of the whole plan. But, as always, the question came up as to where, and how we would get the money.

We succeeded in getting the late E. B. Sturges, who owned the plot of land where the Women's Institute has been erected, to donate the plot for a playground. We estimated then that to equip it would cost of minimum of $500.

We called on the Mayor and City Council for an appropriation, but they could not understand the need for it. In fact, we were told that there were enough backyards for children to play in and it appeared they did not understand that for children to play properly, someone should supervise them. So we were confronted with two problems: first, where to get the money to equip the playground and second, how to get a leader. Miss Virginia Gulick, who was then a kindergarten teacher in Linden Street Temple, maintained by the public school, volunteered to give her time to supervise and to lead the playgrounds during vacation. But we had a lot of trouble with the school board as they did not want to give her permission for this although she would not get paid for it. Their claim was that vacation was given to school teachers to enable them to assume leadership in the public schools or kindergarten, fully rested for the next term.

However, we overcame this objection, as public opinion was with us. Miss Gulick's offer to volunteer to supervise the first playground was accepted with thanks. Then the question was how to raise $500 as in those days it was a lot of money. So we adopted an idea for buttons which would read "We Want Playgrounds"; the children were to sell them for ten cents apiece.

I remember at a State Elks Convention being held in the latter part of July, Arthur Dunn, a prominent lawyer in Scranton, and I were trailing the Elks parade on horseback and being followed by a group of children selling "We Want Playgrounds" buttons to people watching the parade.

We raised, if my memory serves me correctly, about $200 from the sale of buttons and the balance was financed by the committee.

The first playground was very successful—watched and admired by everyone in Scranton—and the second year we we didn't have much trouble getting the city to appropriate funds to finance two playgrounds, one in Central City and one in Green Ridge.

The late C. S. Weston became very much interested and appropriated enough money to finance the first Recreation Center in Providence and also put up one of the buildings.

At a later date, the city passed a resolution for the Mayor to appoint a commission of five to take charge of the Recreation in Scranton. I was Chairman of the Commission for ten years and under my administration three public swimming pools were erected and an inside swimming pool in the recreation building in Providence.

I believe it was 1915 when the late C. S. Weston created a memorial in the memory of his late sister, Mrs. Byrd, and we were consulted as to what kind of memorial he could erect. Finally, after many meetings with Mr. Weston, he took our advice and purchased land from the House of Detention in the Providence section; a building was erected on the plot which was known as Recreation Parks—a place for elderly people to spend their leisure time. This entailed about $50,000.

The good work of the Recreation Commission could probably be better explained by this Proclamation by the late Mayor Fred J. Huester:

A PROCLAMATION BY MAYOR HUESTER

I, Fred J. Huester, Mayor of the City of Scranton, do hereby proclaim this week, beginning Monday, July 22, as Scranton Playground Week. Specifically, the intent of said proclamation is to commemorate twenty-six years of progress by our Bureau of Recreation.

Our citizens are rightfully proud of their recreation bureau and the advancements it is making in the realm of administering public recreation, in its many diversified fields, throughout every day of the year.

During this week, more than at any other time during the year, we should recall the service rendered in past years by the founders of our expanding public recreation system. I very particularly call attention to Mr. A. B. Cohen, Mr. Ralph E. Weeks for their persistent efforts with the cooperation of the late Col. Hitchcock, Wiliam Hagen and C. H. R. Jackson in bygone years to lay the foundation for what is now a progressive program; a program that to the full extent of its 1940 budget, is rendering notable service to all of Scranton. I acknowledge the debt of this municipality to the past members of our Municipal Recreation Commission whose responsibility then, as now, it was to always guide the course of the recreation bureau.

When I left the office of Chairman, we had, in addition

to the buildings and the swimming pools, about seventeen playgrounds, each supervised by two leaders, and the City appropriated about $55,000 for maintaining them.

In appointing leaders for the playgrounds during the summer months, we adopted the following procedure: after we received applications from young men and women who wanted to be appointed leaders, they had first to pass a written examination prepared by the Superintendent of the Recreation Commission and then appear before the Personnel Committee which judged their personalities. I remember one case which put me in a peculiar predicament.

The men and women who appeared before the Personnel Commission had their names arranged alphabetically. The Superintendent was told to call one applicant and said that he was sitting beside another man and they were consulting each other about the questions and answers. He told them to break away but they did not mind him. He submitted to us the application papers of both applicants and we found that question #5 was erased on both papers and the same answers were submitted in each case. We told the Superintendent to bring in this person and when we confronted him with the charge, he put the blame on the other man. So the Commission decided to call in the other man too. When the two appeared before the board, each blamed the other and we were convinced that both of them were guilty. So, notwithstanding the fact that the question was not very important, we decided that it was unethical and therefore both applications were rejected.

As it happened, one of the applicants was a Jewish boy doing a lot of volunteer work at the Y and I was asked by the Executive Director, Mr. Sam Shair, and by the President of the Board, Mr. Oppenheim, to see if this boy could receive the appointment.

Knowing what would happen if this applicant was rejected, I called Mr. Shair and told him that this particular man had disqualified himself. Mr. Shair pleaded that the boy needed the money and therefore, because the question was not of great importance, asked that we reconsider his application. I told Mr. Shair that as a rule we didn't permit any-

body to appear on behalf of his favorite, but we would make an exception for Mr. Shair and would permit him to make his plea.

When we reconvened, Mr. Shair appeared before the Board and said that the boy was very handy and was doing recreation work at the Y and if a mistake was made in answering the question, it was very likely that he was nervous.

When Mr. Shair left, I asked the Board what was their pleasure, and a motion was made that the application should be reconsidered and same was seconded. I asked the Board what they would do with the other party whose application was rejected, but they wouldn't give any consideration to the man. I told the Board that this was not fair; if one application was being reconsidered, the other was entitled to the same consideration, and for that reason I would not accept the motion unless both of them would be considered. The Board didn't agree with me that both of them should be reconsidered, and they said that only the Jewish boy's application would be reconsidered. So, after arguing pro and con, the Board refused to reconsider the application for the second one and I refused to take the motion so both of them were out.

Knowing that this matter could not be secret, I called on Mr. Oppenheim and Mr. Shair and I gave the reasons for my action. My reasons were as follows: this was a Jewish boy and the other boy was from the Bellevue section; the people from Bellevue would be justified in accusing me of favoring this applicant because he was a Jew, but this was not the fact. The fact was that I did not favor the Jewish boy's application to be reconsidered because the boy from Bellevue was left out in the cold. I told the Committee I wanted both applications to be reconsidered or both of them would be out. The Board did not agree with me; therefore both of them were out. Mr. Oppenheim and Mr. Shair gave me credit for taking this position and preventing a lot of criticism in town.

In April, 1942, I submitted my resignation as Chairman and member of the Board because I had other activities which

took my time and I felt that the Recreation Commission was capable of continuing without my assistance. I received the following letter signed by the Secretary of the Commission:

Scranton, Pa.
Bureau of Recreation

April 2, 1942

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Your resignation was read at a special meeting held by the Recreation Commission on Monday, April 6, 1942, in the Chamber of Commerce.

The Board, after accepting your resignation, went on record and instructed the Secretary to write you as follows:

That the members of the Recreation Commission of the City of Scranton regret the fact that you find it necessary to resign as Chairman of the Board. They recognize that you have been one of the outstanding citizens in the city who has devoted much of your time in making it possible for the Recreation Bureau of the City of Scranton to reach its present condition.

Your office, we believe, has given you great satisfaction in addition to the good it has done for the children of our city.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ David J. Thomas
Secretary

CHAPTER XI

SCRANTON'S "OLD-TIME" POLITICS

Politics in Scranton, while not directly a Jewish problem, is worth mentioning here because our Jewish people have always been interested in local affairs including politics.

I therefore want to mention some of the political facts and anecdotes which may be of interest to our community.

How Politics Were Run in "Olden Times"

After I had lived in Scranton for many years, I was finally dragged into its political life. In those days politics were controlled by "machines" headed by "bosses."

I remember that in the State of New York the Tammany Hall machine dominated the political life of the state by practically running the Democratic Party. Tammany Hall could make or break people seeking political office.

In some states, the machines and bosses were not as strong as they were in New York. The State of Ohio was controlled by Boss Mark Hanna and he was the man who made William McKinley President of the United States. The late Prendergast was boss of the State of Missouri and he was the man who pushed Harry Truman into political life; made him County Commissioner first and later helped him become a United States Senator.

The state machines which were controlled by bosses also controlled little bosses in their respective communities. Pennsylvania had a very strong machine headed by the late Matt

Quay, controlling the Republican Party. He was so strong that the local people who followed his lead were able to control the political life of their respective communities.

The way I was dragged into the political life of Scranton was as follows:

The 8th and 16th wards were mostly populated by Jewish and Irish people. The list of the ward's candidates for office had to have the stamp of approval of the ward leader, otherwise their efforts would end in defeat.

During McKinley's administration, he appointed John Wanamaker as Postmaster General. Wanamaker was a reformer and was seeking clean politics. Whether true or false, there was a rumor in Pennsylvania that John Wanamaker was spending millions of dollars hiring Pinkerton detectives to wipe out the political crooks in the state.

To give you an idea of the way ward politics worked when candidates did not get the approval of the leader of the ward, I recall the case of a very influential physician by the name of Peter Gunster running for Mayor of Scranton. He had the backing of everybody who was seeking honest elections. His opponent was a liquor dealer who had the machine with him. I remember that in the primary election after the votes were counted, notice of the count was posted on the door of the election booth. When I passed by I found that Peter Gunster had received seven votes in the first district of the 16th ward. I called on the ward leader and told him that Gunster's own family consisted of twelve people, mainly his brothers and sons; I said I was sure that at least his family had voted for him. He said to me, "I think you are right, I will go and change it." He changed the vote from seven to fifteen, giving Gunster a "lead" over his family.

I was interested in the welfare of the community, particularly the 8th and 16th wards, so during the next election I took advantage of the rumor that Postmaster-General Wanamaker hired detectives to watch the election districts. As a result, on the day of election even people who were very sincere in casting their ballots in the right way, were

afraid to go near the election booths as they didn't want to be implicated.

The next morning, I was called by the late Ezra H. Ripple, and he told me he had heard that I interfered in the primary election and that I scared people away by telling them that detectives were watching them.

I told Mr. Ripple that I didn't scare anybody—I simply repeated the general rumor which was being publicized that John Wanamaker had hired detectives. Mr. Ripple was himself very much interested in politics and he was the right hand of Congressman Connell. He complimented me on the way I was able to scare people away from voting that day—although personally he didn't like it. From that time on, against my will, I was dragged into politics.

MY ASSOCIATION WITH COLONEL EZRA H. RIPPLE

Colonel Ezra H. Ripple was a Colonel in the Civil War. As I understood it, he handled the financial affairs and political interests of Mr. Connell.

William Connell was the recognized boss in Lackawanna County with the full support of Matt Quay, the boss of Pennsylvania. People seeking office in Lackawanna County had to have the approval of William Connell or else their aspirations would surely meet with defeat.

I remember when the late George Howell was running for Congress on the Democratic ticket against Mr. Connell. As it happened, Howell was elected to Congress. Connell was contesting the election and after dragging the investigation for almost two years, Connell was declared as the duly elected Congressman. Howell, meanwhile, lost all salary for the two years which he spent in Washington.

Colonel Ripple appeared to be a very honest politician; he never asked any of his lieutenants to do any crooked work and if there was any wrong-doing it was not on direct orders from Mr. Ripple. They could only read his wishes between the lines.

My acquaintance with Colonel Ripple was as follows: he was the head of the Grand Army of the Republic, which

was very strong in those days; in fact, it had its own building, called the GAR building, at the corner of Linden Street and Penn Avenue. Members of the Grand Army used to visit the public schools on Decoration Day, explaining to the pupils all they had done during the Civil War. I had the idea of inviting Colonel Ripple and his committee to also visit the Montefiore Hebrew School and he gladly accepted the invitation.

One of our pupils was prepared with a patriotic speech after Colonel Ripple's talk and it impressed him very much. He was anxious to know what the Hebrew School was accomplishing and after the Principal explained that we were teaching the Hebrew language and a thorough knowledge of the Bible and Jewish history, as well as the ordinary subjects, he was very much impressed. He asked me how the school was maintained and I told him that it depended a great deal on private contributions. We were pleasantly surprised the next morning when we received a check for one hundred dollars from Mr. Ripple with a notation that this would be his annual contribution.

The influence and strength of politicians in those days was exemplified by the case of the late Judge Robert Archbald, who was elevated by the President of the United States to the Court of Commerce. Some local politicians who were close to the machine were not pleased with some of his decisions, so they brought charges against him which were never verified. However, the Congress recommended to the Senate that Judge Archbald be impeached, and he was.

MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE LATE MAJOR EVERETT WARREN, FATHER OF EDWARD WARREN AND MRS. SCRANTON

In 1906, the leaders of the community put up Benjamin Dimmick as candidate for Mayor. At that time, I was recognized as the so-called leader of the 16th ward. Major Warren sent for me and asked me to interest myself in the candidacy of Mr. Dimmick. While I didn't know Mr. Dimmick personally, I had heard so much about him that I thought

he would be an ideal man for Mayor of the city of Scranton.

He was nominated by the Republican Party and his opponent on the Democratic side was the late John Gibbons, a coal operator on Pittston Avenue. In politics, he was good material as he was a very liberal spender, particularly when he used to go from saloon to saloon buying drinks for everyone.

I remember that we were very much embarrassed one evening when the Montefiore Hebrew School had its annual ball in the old Music Hall on Lackawanna Avenue. Both candidates, Dimmick and Gibbons, were invited. Our embarrassment came when Mr. Dimmick was on the platform talking about how people should interest themselves in honest politics. In the middle of his talk, Gibbons came in with his group. In the rear of the hall was a barroom, so Mr. Gibbons said to the boys, "Oh, stop listening to that guy, come on, let's have a drink." A great number of people followed Mr. Gibbons and you can imagine how we felt when Mr. Dimmick was left with only a few people listening to his speech.

The election was the hottest we ever had in Scranton and each side worked very hard to have its candidate elected. In those days, Penn Avenue Synagogue and Linden Street Temple didn't harmonize and whatever the members of the Linden Street Temple were for, Penn Avenue was always against it. Something happened on election day which embarrassed Linden Street members. A committee consisting of members of Penn Avenue Synagogue called on Mr. Gibbons, Democratic candidate for Mayor, and told him that Penn Avenue Synagogue was a very poor congregation and would like to get some coal from the Gibbons Coal Company. Mr. Gibbons said he would be very glad to send about fifteen tons of coal to them. The man in charge of delivery to Penn Avenue was told to go to Mulberry Street and when reaching Penn Avenue to inquire about the Jewish Synagogue. It appeared that the driver, instead of going to Mulberry Street went to Linden Street and at the corner of Penn Avenue made an inquiry as to where to deliver the coal to the Jewish synagogue. He was directed to the Linden Street Temple

and delivered the coal there. When the congregation of Penn Avenue discovered this, they thought they were double-crossed, and told us that we deliberately told the driver to deliver the coal to Linden Street.

Of course, Penn Avenue Synagogue was disappointed that instead of getting the coal, Linden Street got it, and the consequence was that they were against Mr. Gibbons.

The next morning we called Gibbons Coal Company and told them that somebody put coal which we never ordered in our bin and asked them to send somebody to take the coal back. The manager made a proposition that we buy the coal from them, which we did for fifty cents on the dollar.

This little political trick was heard all over and reached headquarters, where they all had a good laugh.

In connection with my affiliation with the late Everett Warren, I remember this incident. There was a minister from Brooklyn by the name of Madison C. Peters who preached justice to the Jews. Nobody knew why. In fact, he published a book about justice to the Jews, and I obtained a couple of copies, thinking it would be a very good idea to give them to some of my Christian friends. So on Christmas I sent one of the books to Everett Warren. At that time I had a store on Spruce Street and after Christmas Mr. Warren came into my store, brought back the book (very much disturbed) and made the remark, "Have I done anything for which you would have to call my attention to justice to the Jews? I think I have always been fair to my Jewish friends and there was no reason to send me a book to remind me of justice to them." Of course, I was very much embarrassed and I didn't know what to say. However, I told him that the reason I sent him the book was because of his friendship toward my people, not because there was any doubt as to his feelings or ideas.

WHAT THE RIPPER BILL MEANT TO SCRANTON

There were always two factions in local politics, the Connells and their opposition headed by James Moir. In 1899 James Moir ran for mayor on the Republican ticket.

There was a certain group of Democrats which was loyal to the Connells, called the "Connell Democrats." As it happened, the Connell faction lost at this time, and James Moir was elected Mayor.

The Connell Democrats could not forget the defeat, so finally a bill was passed in the Pennsylvania legislature for all second class cities to abolish the office of Mayor and, instead, have the government appoint a Recorder. They called this the "Ripper Bill" because all the mayors of second class cities, including Mayor Moir, were ripped out of office. When Mayor Moir and the Mayor of Reading were ripped out of office, the Mayor of Reading was reappointed as Recorder. Because the whole deal was introduced in order to get rid of Mayor Moir, he was not reappointed as Recorder, instead the late William J. Connell was appointed.

Among the people who were always against Connell and were for Mayor Moir was mounted policeman Joseph Block, the first mounted policeman in the city of Scranton. When William Connell was appointed as Recorder, he tried to get rid of all the people who supported Moir.

I remember a certain Sunday afternoon when I didn't have a telephone in my home. An officer called at my home and told me that the Director of Public Safety, the late F. L. Wormser, wanted to see me immediately in his office. When I got there, I found Recorder Connell in the Director's office and they told me that Joseph Block was being fired. I asked them why they were telling that to me and I was told that they wanted to appoint another Jew to replace Joseph Block and they wanted me to recommend someone.

It was difficult for me to tell all this to Joseph Block, so I called together some people interested in public affairs —the late B. C. Levy, Barnett Levy, Marcus Solomon, Isadore Finkelstein, A. Goldberg and Block's brother-in-law, the late M. J. Cohen—and after going over the matter carefully we decided to send for Joseph Block, tell him that he was being dismissed and that we were recommending a man to replace him.

We decided that his other brother-in-law, the late Bernard Atlas, who kept a saloon at that time on West Market

Street, would be recommended to replace Block and Block could take over the saloon.

The next morning I called at the Director's office and told him that we were recommending a man who was physically able to discharge the duties of a policeman, a very handsome young man whom the Jewish people would be pleased to see a policeman. I failed to say that he was a brother-in-law of Joseph Block.

Atlas was physically examined and was told to order a uniform, and after he was sworn in as an officer, I was called to City Hall and given h--- for putting over a dirty trick by recommending the brother-in-law of Joseph Block; then Atlas was fired. They were very angry with me and of course I told them I didn't know it was necessary to mention the fact that he was Joseph Block's brother-in-law.

The next day I was called again to City Hall and told that while I didn't deserve any consideration, they would give me another opportunity to name a policeman and they would overlook the business with Atlas; therefore I should recommend another Jew as a policeman, but not, of coure, any relative of Joseph Block.

I called together the "machine," as it was called in those days, which was interested in clean public affairs, and we decided to recommend Harry Flax. Harry Flax was a milkman, very strong and physically fit. The Department accepted our recommendation, but it wasn't easy to get permission for Flax to wear Atlas' uniform (being of the same build, it fit him very nicely). This was no minor consideration, as otherwise Bernard Atlas would have lost the eighty-five dollars he paid for the uniform.

Going back to the influence of the "machine" I would like to relate a very personal experience. In 1905, there were complaints made against the directors of the school board. The late E. B. Sturgess who was very much interested in public affairs called me in and asked me to run against the late Dr. Longstreet for School Director of the 16th Ward. I told Mr. Sturgess that I wasn't a reformer and asked him how he could elect anybody without money. He told me that the *Scrantonian* had agreed to give me full support and they

would give me all the space necessary to urge the people of the 16th Ward to elect me as a member of the School Board.

The *Scrantonian* gave me full support, assigning the late M. J. O'Toole, who was then City Editor, to give me all the time necessary to promote my candidacy. However, the machine was against me and I was badly defeated in the primary election.

VICE CONDITIONS IN SCRANTON

In the early 1930's the citizens of Scranton were very much alarmed by the vice condition that existed in Scranton. Every day the newspapers printed stories about how vice was being commercialized in this vicinity and street-walkers were being protected by the police.

The Ministerium and United Churches of Lackawanna County, after investigation, decided that a commission of laymen could serve much better than church officials.

I remember one day when the former minister of Elm Park Church, Dr. Henry H. Crane, called on me to ask that I act as a member of a committee of five to investigate vice conditions in Scranton. Dr. Crane told me that the Ministerium Committee was considering a committee of citizens who had the welfare and the reputation of the community at heart, to make a thorough investigation of the vice conditions and to make recommendations on how to remedy matters.

The Ministerium Committee appointed a committee which consisted of the following: Ralph E. Weeks, Dr. J. Norman White, A. B. Cohen, William E. Bright and M. J. Martin. The first meeting of the Committee, headed by Dr. Henry H. Crane and Dr. Peter K. Emmons (representing the United Churches) decided to make a thorough investigation, check the stories printed in the press and report back to the Ministerium Committee.

After spending weeks on this work, we reported the following:

1. "That in many instances, proprietresses and inmates of disorderly houses have been allowed to continue their nefarious

business at new locations when the old establishments had been closed by the police department.

2. "That in some instances the proprietresses of old establishments have not been molested except for the customary occasional raids and arrests, with the posting of deposits which are later forfeited.
3. "That those arrested have not been jailed, nor even held for the Grand Jury.
4. "That prostitutes and their accomplices solicit on the streets of our city and are practically unmolested.
5. "That an elaborately equipped gambling house was found to be operating on Wyoming Avenue. That after prolonged protestation the place was finally closed and the furnishings moved, but no arrests were made, or police officers suspended for neglect of duty. However, we are told the same management opened a place on Lackawanna Avenune, and for months this place was allowed to continue. No raids were made except by the Sheriff—no arrests by the police."

We recommended to the Ministerium Committee that a certain number of policemen who were implicated in protecting some of the houses and speakeasies, after being duly investigated and found guilty, should be relieved of their duties; the Mayor fully agreed.

Many suggestions had been made by some civic leaders which we felt were neither practical nor feasible, for instance: a proposition was made that certain streets should be designated as "red light" districts, thinking that respectable people would hesitate to go through. We rejected this, first, because it would indicate approval of the citizens and secondly, because it would give a black name to the community and would create a tremendous graft condition as owners of houses would pay to be protected.

Another proposition was that a law should be enacted whereby places where hard liquor was sold should not employ females, because they sometimes served as a meeting place. We consulted the managers of the Hotels Casey and Jermyn and they agreed that it would help a great deal to uplift the morale of the community, but there was a question as to whether a law of this kind would ever be passed since it would require the Representatives of the entire State to enact it.

I proposed that a house of ill-repute, after being raided the second time, should be padlocked. It reminds me of a certain passage in Talmud about preventing crimes which says:

"La Achbero genvo ele Achure Ganvo."
The meaning is: "It isn't a mouse who does the damage, it is the hole where she hides. Close the hole and you don't have any mouse."

It was my idea that if the houses would be padlocked, then the places where women made a business of prostitution would be minimized. While the Committee agreed fully, the question again was whether our House of Representatives would pass a law of this kind.

What we accomplished was as follows:

First, the Mayor agreed that all officers who were guilty of misconduct, after being found guilty, should be relieved of their duties; second, the publicity of the activities of the vice committee scared away some of the street-walkers and also the proprietresses of the houses and we felt that under the circumstances, our job was well done.

Wherever possible, I have asked some of the people who might be interested and remember matters in which we had a common interest to verify my recollections.

One of the members who was concerned about vice conditions in the 1930's, Dr. Henry H. Crane, now minister of the Central Methodist Church in Detroit, was kind enough to advise me on May 29, 1957 as follows:

My Dear A. B.

Your gracious letter of May 15th (1957) together with the enclosures entitled "Vice Conditions in Scranton" in the 1930's was received. I am delighted to know that you are writing your memoirs and I shall be anxious to be one of the first readers thereof.

Your statement concerning our attack on the vice conditions in Scranton in the early '30's is as essentially correct as anyone could ask.

Most respectfully,

/s/ H. H. Crane.

A similar letter was received from Dr. P. K. Emmons, of Westminster Presbyterian Church on May 25, 1957.

Dear A. B.

I am very much interested in your memories of the vice conditions in Scranton of the early 1930's.

Your comments are absolutely correct.

Very cordially yours,

/s/ Peter K. Emmons.

CHAPTER XII

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

A new modern community center was recently erected at 601 Jefferson Avenue. This represents a great many changes since the first Y.M.H.A. was organized in 1909. In those days, there was a small group of young men meeting in several different locations, such as Adams Avenue and Lackawanna Avenue.

In 1913, with the cooperation of Samuel Samter, David Landau and Charles Ball and, under my direction, a campaign was conducted to raise $50,000; it met with great success—the amount was over-subscribed in eleven days.

I thought that at the time when we are occupying the wonderful new Jewish Community Center Building it is worthwhile to have on record the history of the Y. M. H. A. organization and also a detailed report of what we accomplished in the first drive of 1914. According to our records, I find that the first "Y" was organized on September 10, 1909. The organization consisted of a group of young men idealistically inclined to form together to have an organization of young men and women to formulate plans for a future Jewish life in Scranton.

In the beginning, we were only a small group and the finances were obtained from small monthly dues. They had very few activities as they didn't have any recreation or rooms for classes; neither did they have any paid officer to take care of same. We were struggling along—moving from

one place to another starting with Lackawanna Avenue on the third floor and from there to Wyoming Avenue and then to Adams Avenue.

In those days there were no Y. M. H. A. buildings to speak of in the United States. New York City had two buildings, one located at East Broadway and Jefferson Street, called the Hebrew Educational Alliance. This was organized as a center for the East Side young men and women, particularly to hold Americanization classes. The other building was situated at Lexington Avenue and 92nd Street and was called the Y. M. H. A. and was donated by the late Jacob Schiff. To my recollection, I don't believe there were any other buildings in the United States for the purpose of educational or recreational centers for young men and women.

In 1913 the late Louis Grass was elected President of the Scranton Y.M.H.A. In that year the late Judge of the United States Court of Commerce, Julian Mack, interested himself in organizing, on a wide scale, Y. M. H. A. buildings. Communities were asked to appoint delegates to meet in New York at which time Judge Mack would explain the purpose.

President Grass appointed me as delegate to represent Scranton. The meeting in New York was well attended and after Judge Mack explained the purpose, he made an appeal to the delegates to interest their respective communities to put up central buildings. Being impressed by the appeal of Judge Mack, I spoke on behalf of the Jewish community of Scranton, stating that they would go on record to build the first Y. M. H. A. although I was not instructed by the community to offer this, since the Scranton community was unable to even think about putting up a building. Judge Julian Mack, in a gentlemanly manner, refused the offer from the Scranton delegate, claiming that the Scranton community was not large enough to be entrusted to build the first Y. M. H. A., as everything would depend on the success or failure of the first building of Y. M. H. A.'s in other communities.

After the meeting was over, a group of people were talking matters over and among them were Judge Mack and Dr. Israel Edwin Goldwasser, who was acting as chief ad-

visor for the National Y. M. H. A. I was very much encouraged by the sentiment expressed by Dr. Goldwasser, that the community of Scranton could accomplish in a small way the building of a small center.

When I returned to Scranton I called together all the members of the Y. M. H. A. and I reported to them the experience which I had in New York at the convention. I told them that we were very much belittled as they claimed that Scranton was not a community to be entrusted to receive the backing of the national organization in erecting a Y. M. H. A. as they said that in case of a failure it would discourage other communities. We shouldn't forget the fact that in 1913 scientific drives for community buildings or otherwise were not common and to formulate a plan to raise the money was the greatest problem. The boys at the meeting said that they would not take the insult to our community; they felt as I did—that by hard work we could accomplish it. Many meetings were held to formulate plans as it was our idea that if we could buy a building that would not exceed $15,000 we could probably accomplish our goal.

When David Landau was elected president of the group, we decided that in order to accomplish what we were aiming for, we must have a united community; the community was very much divided, particularly in the case of the Reform congregation which was not very sympathetic with the problems of the Orthodox Jews. However, great credit was due to David Landau and the late Charles Ball as they interested the late Samuel Samter in the project of having a place where young men and women could gather and could solve the problems pertaining to the youth.

A Building Committee was appointed, consisting of Isadore Finkelstein, David Landau, Charles Ball, and A. B. Cohen. After meeting with Mr. Samter many times, he agreed to interest the business people in the project of helping erect a building.

The late Harry Siegel, who was then the leading realty man, proposed that we try to buy the vacant lot on Washington Avenue between the Y. M. C. A. and the Legionnaires' building, known then as the Scranton Engineering Club. He

obtained an option from the late James Linen who was then President of the First National Bank and executor of the estate for that particular plot of land. The option was $26,000. Of course, this was out of the question as we never thought about paying that price for a vacant lot and then erecting a building.

A few days after the option was obtained, I got an urgent call from Mr. Linen. When I called on him, I found that he was very much upset as he told me that he made a terrible mistake. The price of $26,000 was only for a forty foot lot, but when he gave us the option he failed to mention the footage. He simply gave us that option for the lot adjoining the Y. M. C. A. and the Scranton Engineering Club. He told me that he would be willing to pay any amount we would ask in order to change the figure from $26,000 to $52,000 or else return the option. Of course, to change the figures was out of the question. As chairman of the contemplated drive, I called together my committee and I explained to them that it wouldn't be fair or honorable to take advantages of an honest mistake; they all agreed and I was instructed to call on Mr. Linen and to give back his option.

I told Mr. Linen that none of us would take advantage of an honest mistake, particularly when we were negotiating for the community and therefore, in consideration of one dollar I could return his option. He was so pleased and impressed by the action of our committee that he said it was unbelievable—he didn't know of any other group of people that would be so liberal and honest about a matter of this kind and he told me to tell the committee that whenever we would start our drive he would see that his friends contributed generously to our cause.

As you will see from the report that I submitted after the drive, the non-Jewish contributions were almost one third of the amount which we raised.

We had a great problem on our hands but we thought it was worthwhile trying for a bigger amount, as a building for $12,000 or $15,000 would not answer our purpose. Meeting after meeting was held and every time our confidence and enthusiasm was increased and finally I was instructed to

prepare a plan whereby we could raise at least $40,000 to $50,000. I submitted a plan which was practically new in those days (from my recollection the first scientific drive was when the war started and drives were organized for relief in 1917). The plan which was accepted was practically what we are doing now—we had division chairmen, captains and lieutenants who were enlisted to do the work. Great success was obtained in the "15 Day Drive" which started on January 25, 1914. In fact, while our goal was $50,000 within fifteen days, we raised almost $53,000 in eleven days.

Prior to the drive, we carried on a publicity stunt which we could not do today. I obtained from advertisers their permission to let us use the space on street car lines for one-day publicity. We arranged to have cards replace the advertisers' cards which would read "$50,000 drive in 15 Days for the Y. M. H. A." This was carried in every street car from Scranton to Forest City. We guaranteed the advertisers that on the second day we would put their cards back and if there was any damage to them we would be responsible.

All details of the drive were prepared in my own office in conjunction with David Landau, Charles Ball and Isadore Finkelstein. Our expenses in the drive were very little as the preparedness and conducting was all done by volunteers.

The detailed report shows that the drive lasted only eleven days and we raised $52,962.50. The number of people that participated was sixty solicitors and thirteen who prepared and served luncheons—a total of seventy-three participants. In my report I have all the names of those participants. The total number of pledges was 1494 and as stated above, we were glad that out of the $52,962.50 which was raised, $16,703 was raised by our Christian friends. I want to mention the fact that my committee called on the late Bishop Hoban and asked whether or not he would have a Catholic priest address our open meeting. His answer was that he would be very glad to do it himself. On Sunday, the 25th of January, Bishop Hoban in his sermon asked people to help the drive and in finishing he said that the children of Christ should help the children of Abraham. We believe this was a very fine gesture.

Our headquarters was located on Adams Avenue; I was in charge of the drive and my assistants were Celia Champanier, Celia Cohen and Arthur Caplan. All the workers were volunteers. The report which I submitted to the Board of Directors, dated March 5, 1914, tells the story of the success of the drive.

The above is a report taken from memoranda in my possession which do not appear in the regular minutes.

From further memoranda, the lot was finally purchased from the Matthews estate. We made plans to erect a new front to the frame building on the lot. The architect was the late Albert Ward. We made a loan from the Scranton-Lackawanna Trust Company for $16,000 on a fifteen year plan with the understanding that the Board of Directors at that time could not be changed until the last dollar was paid to the Trust Company.

In 1926, there was a movement afoot to further expand the facilities of the "Y". It came about in this way: Myer Davidow, a member of the Board of the Center for a number of years, offered the Board of Directors a gift of $50,000 toward the erection of a new front for the then existing building on Wyoming Avenue if this amount would be matched through the efforts of the Board. The Board accepted the offer, and I was assigned to raise the necessary $50,000. For that amount, it was then possible to put a front addition onto the building providing a new library, lounge room, game room facilities and additional meeting rooms.

The Center thus moved into its second phase of growth and development which carried it through the depression years and through the second World War.

Myer Davidow died on October 8, 1934. He provided in his will that trust fund for the erection of a building known as the Myer Davidow Memorial Building be established. The will provided that the building should house all charitable organizations of a non-sectarian nature. Also there was a provision that the deed of the building should be entrusted to the Jewish Federation.

Owing to the fact that no provision was made for ade-

quate maintenance, the Jewish Federation declined to take the trust of the building. There was also a provision that in case the Jewish Federation did not accept the responsibility of carrying out the provision of the will, the money should be distributed to charity.

The above reference to the will of Myer Davidow is interesting because it had significant bearing upon the further development of the Y.M.H.A.

In 1945, the late I. E. Oppenheim, then president of the Board of Directors of the "Y", directed that a survey be made of the post-war needs of the Jewish community and the 1200 Jewish young men and women who would return to the community from their service in the Armed Forces; under the direction of Harry Dickstein, this survey was conducted.

Late in 1945, I. E. Oppenheim also appointed E. Lester Man chairman of the Building Committee to develop a further re-modeling program and for a period of a year Mr. Man and his committee explored the possibility of re-modeling the building on Wyoming Avenue and expanding it on a piece of property adjacent to the old building.

In the Spring of 1946, I. E. Oppenheim, having served for a period of eighteen years as Chairman of the Board, felt that the reins of leadership should be taken up by younger men in the community. Accordingly, he resigned, but not without assurance of his continued support to help the Center meet the needs of the community. Under the able direction of George Joel, the executive director of the Y.M.H.A., new facilities and activities had been added which required a more up-to-date building and a new location, as the Wyoming Avenue site was no longer attractive.

David Landau, who was President of the Association forty-two years ago and who at that time, appointed me Chairman of the Building Campaign, became Chairman of the Board of Directors. He, accordingly, appointed Milton Aronsohn Chairman of the Building Committee, and I was asked to take an active interest in raising $240,000. Mr. Oppenheim served as Honorary Chairman, and took an active part in enlisting the support of communal and business

leaders and interpreting the needs of the community. This activity carried through the early winter of 1946, and was concluded during the month of February, 1947. The $240,000 was not enough to carry on the projected re-modeling program and since the campaign provided a three-year period during which to pay, the Board of Directors of the Y.M.H.A. began now to refine its plans and to consider ways and means of raising the additional funds required.

David Landau began to consider approaching the trustees of the Myer Davidow estate to explore the possibility of working out a suitable memorial for Myer Davidow in connection with the Y.M.H.A. building program. These initial discussions were extended until several additional members on the Board encouraged a presentation that would urge these trustees to liquidate the estate and name the Center a substantial beneficiary or to work out an arrangement that would name the Center beneficiary of a plan that would fulfill the spirit of Myer Davidow's wishes as expressed in his will. The Board of Directors of the Center reasoned that it could supplement the monies made available for a new building and the cost of maintenance would be worked out in such a way as to provide substantial benefits to the community. The suggestion was that the Center be included as one of the agencies in the new building, and that a number of the other agencies listed by Mr. Davidow in his will be provided with working space in the building.

This plan was reviewed with Leon M. Levy, then president of the Jewish Federation, who regarded it as a reasonable, satisfactory approach to working out the wishes of Mr. Davidow. Accordingly, steps were initiated to meet with the trustees of the estate and their counsel, and these meetings carried through 1947 and 1948.

During negotiations with the Orphans' Court we had the help of such talented attorneys as Henry Nogi, Emanuel Laster, Morris Gelb, David Landau, and Executive Director George Joel; Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Center, Milton Aronsohn; Leon M. Levy and Bertram N. Linder, Presidents of the Jewish Federation during the years of negotiation, and the following presidents of the

Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish council, as they served: Harry Dickstein, Samuel K. Mittelman and Irving Harris. They negotiated with the trustees of the estate, and approved a certain plan whereby the Federation should assign its right to the Y.M.H.A. which would carry out the wishes of the late Myer Davidow by erecting a modern building and in conjunction with the Myer Davidow Memorial Committee and the Y.M.H.A. committee, the new building was to have the new quarters of the Y.M.H.A. as well as facilities for all charitable organizations.

The arrangements with the trustees of the Myer Davidow Estate were that they would contribute $450,000 and also $20,000 a year for ten years, making a total of $650,000 for the new building.

By 1953, a plot of land on the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Olive Street was purchased at a cost of $44,000, and additional land on the 500 block of Jefferson Avenue was acquired for parking purposes at a cost of $15,000. Then the firm of Gilboy, O'Malley, Bellante and Clauss, was engaged to design the building and the Jewish Welfare Board Building Bureau was engaged as consultants.

In 1954, the Community Center conducted a joint campaign with the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Council to raise funds for the 1954 United Jewish Campaign needs, and to provide an additional $200,000 for the new building.

Ground-breaking for the new Center building was on October 30, 1954. The building was erected under the chairmanship of Milton Aronsohn and his able committee at 601 Jefferson Avenue at a cost of approximately $1,500,000. It was dedicated on May 12, 1957.

In addition to the $650,000 from the Myer Davidow estate, rooms have been endowed as follows:

Samuel Samter Library
The Linder Room
Pell Room
Krotosky Youth Lounge
N. B. Cohen Room
A Room in Memory of the Boys Who Fought in the World War
Buddies Club Room

Harris Room
Friedman Nursery School
A. B. Cohen and Dora Cohen Room—Council Room
Ben Samter Room
The Goodman Lounge
Phil Swartz Room
Land Senior Lounge
Leon Kaplan Music Room
Kahanowitz Room
Beacon Club Room
Strivers Room
Theodore Itzkowitz Room
Sol Davidson, $5,000 for the Sculpture of Moses and the People

These brought in an additional $100,000.

The old Wyoming Avenue Y.M.H.A. was sold to the Ukrainian Society for $100,000.

The following charities are housed in the new building:

Visiting Nurse Association
Hospital Council
Jewish Federation
Lackawanna United Fund
Psychiatric Center
Crippled Children Society
Boy Scouts
Welfare Council
Family Service

The Center owns a twenty-acre day camp site at Chapman Lake valued at $35,000. The camp program is conducted for three hundred children each summer at a budget of $13,600 per annum.

The budget for the year 1958 was fixed at $161,833.

While I have been writing this book, I received the following letter from Attorney David Landau, Chairman of the Board, Jewish Community Center. I can think of no better way of finishing this chapter.

June 20, 1958

Mr. A. B. Cohen
Connell Building
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Friend:

May I commend you for your industry, in preserving for future generations, your history of the Jewish Community Center,

in which both you and I have played a prominent part for close to half a century.

Your history covers the high lights from the inception of the Center in 1909, which was then called the Y.M.H.A. I can attest to the many events, as recorded by you, because I was an active participant in all of them.

The negotiations with the Estate of Myer Davidow, over a period of seven years, were led by me as Chairman of the Board, and as set forth by you in your history, the fabulous new Jewish Community Building stands not only as a monument to Myer Davidow; but stands also as a monumental reward and satisfaction to you, and me, and to all of those who worked with us to attain that accomplishment.

Congratulations, and thanks for your History of the Jewish Community Center.

Faithfully yours,

David Landau,
Chairman Board of Directors.

DL:ej

CHAPTER XIII

WHY I JOINED THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

In principal I was Orthodox, having been raised in an Orthodox atmosphere and always affiliated with the Orthodox group. Of course, where I was raised there was no Conservative or Reform. When I moved to Scranton, the conduct of the Orthodox congregations did not appeal to me. (You will have to appreciate that I am writing of the condition of the Orthodox congregations of sixty years ago.) When I organized the Linden Street Temple, matters had been changed entirely. There was a real Orthodox congregation and if I want to take credit to myself, I can say that during the years in which I acted as President, a great deal of improvement was noticed in the refinement and decorum.

However, this did not satisfy the younger generation who were to perpetuate Judaism. The Rabbis who served as spiritual leaders were Yiddish-speaking, which did not appeal to the younger generation. From time to time, I was able to bring in an English speaking Rabbi, from the Jewish Theological Seminary, but the *Yeshivahs* in those days did not have any English-speaking Rabbis.

I remember in many cases we were supplied with an Orthodox Rabbi who was supposed to speak English, but this was only a tryout, like a new play in the theatre that is sent to the country before appearing in New York.

I remember, during one U.J.A. drive we were supplied with fine English speakers but a demand was made for one fine Yiddish speaker. So, New York sent Dr. Jundling. I knew Dr. Jundling when he arrived in the United States. He was one of the refugees, one of the Chief Rabbis of Hamburg, Germany, but this was ten years before he came to Scranton. I took it for granted when I asked for a Yiddish speaker that Dr. Jundling would be the right man, but my great disappointment came as we were sitting on the platform and waiting for the chairman to open the meeting. Dr. Jundling said to me: "My friend, you don't know how happy I am to be in Scranton. I can speak English, but I never had the opportunity to speak in public, so I thought I would accept the invitation to speak in Scranton as my first opportunity to speak in English." You can imagine the way I felt: I asked for a Yiddish speaker and instead they sent me a man who wished to use Scranton as a tryout, to deliver his maiden English speech.

His speech wasn't bad but would require three interpreters, one English, one German and one Yiddish.

I used to invite young men from the Seminary to stay with us over Saturday but this did not work out satisfactorily, as they never delivered an address that appealed to us. They were not to blame but they did not understand the situation.

The first Rabbi engaged from the Yeshiva was the late Rabbi Ebin; while he was a very fine young man, he still did not satisfy the younger generation on account of his sermon being in Yiddish.

When Rabbi Ebin was serving Linden Street, Penn Avenue had the late Rabbi Skolsky. As it happened, Rabbi Ebin and Rabbi Skolsky left their positions at the same time. Penn Avenue Congregation proposed to us that, instead of having two Rabbis, why not have one to serve both congregations? This appealed to us very much.

But the leaders of Penn Avenue made a terrible mistake in electing a Rabbi without consulting the members of Linden Street, who resented it very much. Not because they did not like Rabbi Guterman. In fact, if Linden Street mem-

bers were looking for a Rabbi, they could not find a better young man to fill the position. We found that Rabbi Guterman was well learned, a great authority on the Talmud and otherwise appeared to be a very fine gentleman, but the members of the Linden Street congregation resented the fact that the Penn Avenue congregation elected Rabbi Guterman without consulting them; when the late Rabbi Gold stopped off in Scranton on the way from Chicago to New York, the members of Linden Street elected him as their Rabbi and that is where our troubles began. It wasn't between Rabbi Guterman and Rabbi Gold, it was between the troublemakers of Penn Avenue and Linden Street.

While the Linden Street members were the so-called refined type, they were still like the leopard who never changes its spots, so this was a good opportunity for both sides to make trouble and, I, as President of Linden Street, found myself in hot water, trying my best to keep the balance.

In later years, matters quieted down; Rabbi Gold left Scranton and the hot-headed group of Linden Street cooled off a little and we were able to recognize Rabbi Guterman as the Rabbi of Linden Street.

Today, Rabbi Guterman is in charge of six Orthodox congregations and is recognized by the Conservative and Reform, being called the Chief Rabbi of Scranton.

I started to write of why I joined the Conservative group and I lost my way and went back to my old times with the Orthodox.

The main reason I joined and worked for the Conservative movement, was that, to my way of thinking, the only way to conserve Judaism was to change some methods of worship and to adopt methods whereby the younger generation would perpetuate Judaism.

I remember that there was a gathering at my home before the High Holidays and I overheard my children saying that if it "wouldn't be for Father, we would not go to services at all." I turned around and I said to them: "Listen children, as far as I'm concerned, you don't have to go to services. But I would like to know why you don't like to go."

The spokesman for my children said to me: "I might like the services if I knew what he was talking about. There is nobody there to explain to us the meaning of the holiday as we should understand it. Last year I was very much embarrassed when the Cantor started to say a certain prayer and I asked the man sitting alongside of me to tell me where I could find it. He said to me 'Shagits, du vaist nit vu mir halt?' I felt terrible that a man should call me 'Shagits' (ignoramus)."

Right after the holidays, I called together some members of the Congregation and I told them that some changes would have to be made if we wanted our children to perpetuate Judaism.

In order to hasten matters, something happened in the Madison Avenue Temple. They elected a new Rabbi and he was a highly-learned man. On Friday nights he put on a *talis* and a skull cap. The result was that on Friday nights there were more members of Linden Street attending the Madison Avenue Temple services than Madison Avenue Temple members.

This changed our program as we were not in favor of the younger generation turning to the Reform movement.

It will have to be remembered that I am writing the history of the Reform about forty years ago. The Orthodox Jew interested in perpetuating Judaism was not in favor of the Reform movement. While some of the Rabbis were trying their utmost to lead the Reform into Jewish life, in general they did not have any rules to go by.

I remember that every time the Reform Rabbis would have a conference or convention, something new was proposed. There was one conference which they held in Washington, in which they officially tried to change the resting day from the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, to the first day of the week, Sunday.

While it is true that the Sabbath is not being observed by the Orthodox Jews as it should be, it reminds me of the story I mentioned in my chapter called *New York,* in which my late brother and I were invited for Friday night meal to the home of the late Dr. Joseph Labe Sosnitz, himself

strictly Orthodox, observing the Sabbath, but waiting for *Kiddush* for his nephew who had not returned from work. When I asked Dr. Sosnitz if it was necessary to wait for *Kiddush* for a man who was working on the Sabbath he looked at me and smiled and said: "My son, in the Torah, on the observance of the Sabbath is mentioned twice as follows: 'Zichor, you shall remember the Sabbath'. So when a man cannot fully observe then he shall at least be a 'Zichor' and remember the Sabbath."

But the Reform Rabbis in those days did not even want to remember the Sabbath, and some of us thought that joining the Conservative movement would eventually lead us to Reform.

As I said, after the Holidays, a movement started in Scranton to join the Conservative group, and while I personally did not know what Conservatism stood for, one thing I did know was that Conservatism meant *To Conserve Judaism.* While I was a firm believer in the Orthodox doctrine and appreciated all the customs and rules of observance of the Jewish religion, I know one thing that the *geder* (fence) was made by our great Rabbis in order to protect Jewish customs and laws. But the *geder* was made so high that in many cases we overlook the reason for it—just like a man with a garden of beautiful flowers who built a fence around it to prevent people from trespassing on his property and destroying the flowers. But sometimes the fence is so high nobody can see the flowers.

My definition of Conservatism was to lower the fence which protected our customs and religion in such a way that the flowers should not be touched. Our religion is beautiful, but on account of the high fence we sometimes don't see the beauty.

CHAPTER XIV

WE ORGANIZE TEMPLE ISRAEL

I succeeded in interesting a group of people to organize a Conservative congregation.

We were pleasantly surprised at the favorable response we had from the community. Men and women whom we never expected to favor the Conservative movement were very active in organizing the Conservative congregation.

Among them were the late M. L. Goodman, Harry and Samuel Dickstein and the late Jacob Levy. Their enthusiasm was so great that a committee of people whom we never expected to take the lead, headed by the late Jacob Levy, took an option on a building at Monroe Avenue and Gibson Street. The building cost approximately ten thousand dollars but it required a lot of remodeling before it could be occupied. It was remodeled three times and before we were finished it cost forty thousand dollars.

The first president was Samuel Weinberg and the first Rabbi was Alfred Kahn.

The real activities of the Conservative Congregation began in 1923, when the late M. L. Goodman was elected president and the permanent organization was completed with the name Temple Israel.

Reverend William S. Horn was elected as Cantor and also as a teacher in the Hebrew School. After thirty years, he is still serving Temple Israel; like a good wine in the right

container, improving with age. He is considered the best Cantor in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Rabbi Max Arzt was elected as Rabbi in 1924, served Temple Israel for 16½ years when he was called to take an active part in the Jewish Theological Seminary where he is now serving as Vice-Chancellor. Under his administration as Rabbi, a new Temple building was erected with an expenditure of $340,000. The building was dedicated in 1927.

Under Rabbi Arzt, Louis Wolf was elected as Principal of the Hebrew School where he served twenty years; Temple Israel Hebrew School became famous under the administration of Dr. Arzt and Louis Wolf.

I threw myself into the Conservative movement wholeheartedly. I attended many meetings of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the United Synagogue of America. The United Synagogue recognized my enthusiasm and elected me its Vice-President.

They assigned me all the communities in Eastern Pennsylvania—my job was to induce Jews to join the United Synagogue.

I succeeded in organizing Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Pittston, Hazleton, Stroudsburg, Reading and Allentown. While it entailed a lot of work and a lot of time, I was very pleased and I became a great believer in Conservatism.

I made myself an expert at raising money for communities and drives such as the U.J.A., the Y.M.H.A. and others and so at a convention of the United Synagogue in 1934 in Washington, I was assigned to advise leaders of congregations on how to finance synagogues.

In making a thorough investigation of some of the financial troubles of synagogues, I found they were putting the cart before the horse—first collecting money and then dividing it according to the ideas of the finance committee.

I advised them and some congregations followed my advice: first, make up the budget actually required to carry through and then raise the money required. In other words, have a balanced budget; I found from experience that the money raised was spent for necessities which were not anticipated at the beginning of the year and then, finding them-

selves short of money, the Rabbi and other officials suffered. There was such a case in Allentown, where I was sent to straighten out finances because they owed their Rabbi three thousand dollars in back wages.

When Rabbi Arzt left, Rabbi Arthur Buch was elected Rabbi. He was a great orator and made many friends while in Scranton. After serving five years he was called to take charge of a Congregation in Paterson, N. J.

Rabbi Simon H. Shoop was elected in 1949 as Rabbi and spiritual leader. During his administration membership almost doubled and the first activity was his urging of a new Hebrew School building to be erected by buying the lot adjacent to the Temple.

In the beginning, Temple Israel had much trouble in collecting dues before the end of the year and consequently the Temple was obliged to carry members from one year to the next. The loss was very great. In addition, when members were paying their dues annually it was hard for Temple Israel to meet monthly obligations. In consequence we were obliged to borrow money from the bank to carry through to the end of the year.

I devised a system whereby members would order to their banks to pay Temple Israel either monthly, quarterly or semi-annually. I called this "Bank Orders". I had difficulty in arranging this as the bank did not like the idea of acting as what they called "collectors for Temple Israel."

I called the late Elmer Williams, executive vice-president of the Third National Bank who also happened to be Chairman of the Clearing House. I asked him to give me permission to appear before the Clearing House Committee in order to explain my plan.

When I called on the Committee, I made the following statement: "Temple Israel has three hundred members. Suppose the members pay their monthly dues by check. All these checks would be due on the same date, say the first of the month. Assuming that fifty members of Temple Israel are doing their banking at Bank X, Temple Israel is handling fifty checks payable to that bank on the first of the month. There are two ways the Temple could realize the

amount of their checks: either to deposit all the checks or have same cashed. Temple preferred the cash, so on the first of the month, one of the bookkeepers would call on the bank with the fifty checks and ask for paying teller to cash them. It would probably take an hour for this to be done.

"To help the bank, we are prepared to do it the following way: The fifty members doing business in Bank X will authorize the bank to pay to Temple Israel a certain amount as indicated on the bank-order. This will be deposited with the bank, eliminating the paying teller's time and leaving only a job for the bookkeeper to debit the depositor and credit the same to Temple Israel. I believe the bank should appreciate what we intend to do now and it will save a lot of time."

The result was that the bank accepted our bank-orders and while some of our members did not want to sign them, half of them did and the others paid their dues promptly in order to avoid signing the order. As a result, we got our monthly dues and saved a lot of office work by not having to send statements; we had cash and were not obliged to borrow money from the bank to meet our monthly obligations.

The cost of the Temple complete was approximately $345,000. We did not have the entire amount so we made a loan of $100,000 from the bank with collateral by note signed by the Board of Trustees of Temple Israel. In addition to the $100,000 we ran behind for a number of years, which accumulated an additional debt of $40,000, so we owed the bank $140,000, secured by a note signed by the Board of Trustees.

In 1931, at the height of the depression, banks were trying to call in some notes, particularly those which had run for years without making any reduction. The First National Bank notified us that the Federal Reserve had ordered them to call on makers of the note to make payment in full.

Temple Israel had no money even to make a reduction on the note. Financial experts were called in and the advice they gave us was to raise the cash, which was impossible.

The late M. L. Goodman, who was president at the time, asked me whether I could devise a plan whereby some cash, at least, could be raised to make a substantial reduction. I devised a plan whereby $50,000 could be raised by selling bonds which would be redeemable in twenty years. The bank was satisfied that we should make a payment of $12,500 a year reducing our indebtedness by $50,000 in four years.

Selling bonds to clubs and other public institutions to liquidate indebtedness was not new, but the trouble was that no provision was ever made as to how to redeem the bonds at maturity.

I worked out a plan whereby $65,000 life insurance could be bought and Temple Israel would pay the premium. The plan would not increase our budget, as in lieu of interest paid to the bank, Temple Israel would pay the premium on the life insurance.

Before proposing my plans to the Board of Directors I submitted it to Mr. J. F. W. Heinbokel, C.P.A., who was accountant for the banks. I reprint a letter indicating what Mr. Heinbokel thought of this plan.

Owing to the fact that this involved life insurance, I thought some members of the Board of Trustees might think I prepared the plan in order to sell insurance; I announced to the Board that I would eliminate myself from selling the insurance and same should be sold by other agents who were members of the Temple.

I also reprint copies of letters by Mr. M. L. Goodman, President of Temple Israel, Rabbi Max Arzt and the late Cyrus Adler, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

My plan was adopted by other congregations as well as by a Baptist church in Brooklyn, N. Y.

HEINBOKEL GOODWIN AND GRIFFITHS
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
BROOKS BUILDING
SCRANTON, PA.

September 20, 1932

Mr. A. B. Cohen
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

For a number of years past in the course of my work I have

been going over various plans for the financing of institutions, churches, lodges, etc.

I believe the plan which you have devised for the redemption of the $50,000.00 indebtedness existing on the Temple Israel by the issuance of bonds to mature within seventeen years, together with the insurance feature, is one of the best that I have seen.

In checking it over I find the result will be not only the redemption of the indebtedness now in existence, but also the absolute protection of the person who invests in the issue you propose to use for that purpose.

In addition to this feature, the paying of a substantial premium whenever the bond is redeemed, makes the payment of money for these bonds nothing else but a temporary loan with compensation in the way of a premium.

Yours very truly,

/s/ J. F. W. Heinbokel

JFWH/P

THE SCRANTONIAN
The Scrantonian Publishing Co., Inc.,
217-219 Spruce St.,
Scranton, Pa.

December 5, 1932

Mr. A. B. Cohen
A. B. Cohen Public Adjusting Co.,
Connell Building
Scranton, Pa.

My Dear A. B.:

Now that the Temple Israel Redemption Bond Campaign has come to a successful close, I want to write and thank you for the splendid idea and cooperation and leadership you extended to the Temple in assisting to reduce the indebtedness of the organization.

The campaign comes in the darkest time which the Temple has experienced as a light of hope so that some day the Temple can be handed over to our children debt free, a place they can be proud of and look up to.

The Temple will always remember your part in this drive and will always be grateful to you.

Yours very truly,

/s/ M. L. Goodman

MLG.H

TEMPLE ISRAEL
Monroe Avenue and Gibson St.
Scranton, Pa.

Office of
Rabbi Max Arzt.

Sept. 20, 1932

Mr. A. B. Cohen,
Connell Building
Scranton, Pa.

My dear Mr. Cohen:

May I take this occasion to give written expression of my complete and unqualified approval of the ingenious plan which you have devised. I must admit that I first looked upon the proposal thru skeptical eyes. I made an earnest study of the matter and am now convinced that your plan is the only effective means of amortizing the debt of our Temple building. The unique advantage of the plan is that it is **depression proof.** Every member of the congregation can participate. The payments required are so nominal that they are within the reach of all — even children. The miracle of the whole thing is that every cent invested by the subscriber is returned to him with a handsome bonus. The plan will literally save our synagogue from a most serious difficulty, and I know that you will delight in the feeling that you will have played so pivotal a part in that achievement.

Cordially yours,

/s/ Max Arzt

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF AMERICA
Northeast Corner, Broadway and 122d Street
New York City

November 30, 1932.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

I was very happy to hear from Doctor Finkelstein about the excellent work which was done in your congregation under your leadership toward liquidating the indebtedness on the building. To have raised these funds at this time is an extraordinary achievement, and I wish to congratulate you and the members of your committee as well as the congregation itself upon your accomplishment.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/ Cyrus Adler,
President

This plan proved a great success and when the life insurance policies matured, including the accumulated dividends, there was enough to pay the bond-holders for their

investment; the fact that the payment of premiums was in lieu of interest paid to the bank, left a profit to Temple Israel of $78,412.

TEMPLE ISRAEL HEBREW SCHOOL

When Temple Israel was erected, the Hebrew School classes were in the basement on the lower floor and the rooms were not very inviting. We did not have sufficient room in the vestry hall and also the chapel and the kitchen were on the same floor so there was not enough room for either one.

We talked for years about having special school rooms and finally in 1949, Rabbi Shoop urged that we have special quarters for the school rooms.

Before we started to consider the annex to the Temple, the financing was a problem; we still owed $50,000 on the Temple and the annex would entail another $175,000.

I was charged with the responsibility of arranging a loan to secure the erection of the building and with the co-operation of the Building Committee we succeeded in building the annex. This was done under the administrations of former Presidents Morris Gelb and Herman S. Goodman and with the moral support of Rabbi Simon S. Shoop. At the time he was elected Rabbi his first consideration was the building of the Hebrew School and he succeeded in prevailing upon the members that the most important thing for a congregation was to have a modern up-to-date Hebrew school building.

The Board of Directors could not see their way clear as to how the money could be raised as we were still indebted to the Third National Bank for the first mortgage of $50,000. There were many meetings and finally a Building Committee was appointed and I was made Chairman.

At our first meeting we decided that, owing to the fact that we would need cash to pay the contractors before we could start, we should try to get a commitment from the Bank for $100,000 or more; this we did obtain from the Third National Bank. We started cash drives headed by

Jerome Parker and Morris Goodman, and approximately $35,000 was raised. We purchased the lot adjacent to the building for fifteen thousand dollars and plans and specifications were drawn up and a new building was erected containing six classrooms, a large hall for the Junior Congregation, a special room for the kitchen and also a playground for the children. The total cost of the new Hebrew School, the Social Hall, kitchen, Chapel and the Junior Congregation Hall was $175,000.

Today we have one of the finest Hebrew Schools in our part of the State. The classrooms are well ventilated, the chapel has enough room for eighty people and the kitchen is fully equipped with all modern conveniences.

I consider that this job was well done and we are all proud of it. It is worth mentioning that when the building was finished, the Chapel was dedicated in memory of M. L. and Sarah Goodman for which Mr. Herman Goodman donated $3,713.23. The Banquet Hall was dedicated in memory of the Reismans for which Mrs. Pearl Reisman gave $7,000. The Junior Congregation Hall was a gift of Theodore and Florence Koppelman for which they gave $5,000.

CHAPTER XV

THE JEWISH WELFARE BOARD

When the United States entered the war against Germany, the Jewish Welfare Board, headed by Colonel Cotler immediately organized branches of the Jewish Welfare Board in every community. I was appointed Chairman of the Scranton area with instructions to affiliate ourselves with the rest of the agencies so that we could work collectively instead of separately.

From time to time I have heard the question asked, "What is the Welfare Board? What is its purpose? Is it necessary when we have the Y.M.C.A., K. of C. and so on?"

I replied to all of these questions in an article printed in the Scranton Board of Trade Journal dated November 19, 1918, which read as follows:

> "Soon after our country entered the war in the spring of 1917, it was readily seen by the representative Jews of America that in order to prevent duplication of effort and cross purpose of action, the work of the twelve or fourteen leading Jewish social, religious and fraternal organizations of the country, all of which desired to aid in bettering the lot of the Jewish boys away from home, would have to be coordinated under one organization or agency. By the joint action of the representatives of these organizations an entirely new organization was formed, known as the Jewish Welfare Board, which was to perform in one concentrated effort

the various activities of the individual organizations among the Jewish soldiers and sailors of the United States.

"Its officers and executive committee comprised Jews whose names are known from coast to coast. So much for the manner in which the Jewish Welfare Board was formed.

"The next question which might very naturally arise is why the Jewish Welfare Board should be necessary when there is such a complete and highly organized activity as the Y.M.C.A. in each camp. The answer is that the Jewish Welfare Board supplements the work of the Y.M.C.A. and other similar organizations and does not in any way work in competition with them. There are today over 200,000 Jewish men in the United States army and navy, including more than 4,900 officers. It is to promote and safeguard the religious life of these men that the Jewish Welfare Board is primarily intended. For the furtherance of this purpose, and supplementary to it, it furnished them with genial surroundings where they may find rest and comfort and recreation, where religious services are held and books in English, Yiddish and Hebrew may be obtained.

"The work of the Jewish Welfare Board is divided into two general classes, namely, work in the camps and work in cities. The work in the camps is done through a corps of trained workers, of whom there are now over two hundred, including Rabbis, teachers, social workers, professional and business men. These workers, before taking up their duties, undergo a practical training in the history of the movement, the policies of camp and town welfare work and their problems. In all of the larger camps and cantonments buildings have been erected containing auditoriums, rest and writing rooms, libraries, victrolas and pianos, etc. It is from these pleasant, attractive centers that the religious activity of the J.W.B. worker is directed. Here the Sabbath and holiday religious services are held, with the aid of resident and visiting Rabbis. Here the various religious

supplies are distributed, and here classes are held in English, history, Hebrew, current events, etc. And in addition to all of these the worker performs day in and day out those thousand and one acts of personal service and comfort, such as visiting the boys in the hospitals, barracks and guardhouses, writing letters, making purchases, etc., which the boys know only too well are a help and comfort.

"However, although the main purpose of the Jewish Welfare Board is to supply the religious side of the soldier's and sailor's life, it is absolutely non-denominational in all its activities and its entertainments, and quarters are always open to any soldier or sailor, regardless of nationality or creed. The J.W.B. worker cooperates with the other welfare agencies in arranging concerts, theatrical and minstrel shows, patriotic celebrations, lectures, debates, etc.

"In addition to camp work the Jewish Welfare Board has over one hundred and fifty branch organizations in as many cities, whose purpose is to establish community centers for soldiers and sailors containing rest and social rooms, sleeping quarters, baths, etc.; to arrange send-offs to draftees in their towns; provide entertainment for visiting soldiers and sailors, and locate families who will make the visiting boys welcome and give them home surroundings such as they are accustomed to during their visit, and perform many personal services of various kinds.

"Many of the boys who were stationed at Camp Summerall, Tobyhanna, during the past summer, have very pleasant recollections of the work of the Scranton branch of the Jewish Welfare Board. This organization secured the large, modern building of the Scranton Young Mens' Hebrew Association as a social center for soldiers who were given full access to the building, including gymnasium and natatorium privileges, and provided sleeping quarters for a limited number of the men. Also, a substantial breakfast was served every Sunday morning to an ever-increasing number of the boys. All of this

work was conducted on non-sectarian lines, and the privileges were taken advantage of by men of all religions and nationalities.

"Such is the work of the Jewish Welfare Board, and such is the spirit that animates it. It is a spirit which best finds expression in the greeting sent to the J.W.B. by General Pershing, in reply to its New Year greeting: "The constant support and cordial assistance of our brothers of the Jewish faith, and the thought that all creeds are united under one banner, gives courage to our army, and urges it on to victory."

My first job was to contact all agencies such as the Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, Y.M.C.A., Red Cross and the U.S.O.. We formulated plans whereby the work pertaining to the welfare of the boys overseas and in local camps would be conducted in a unified manner. In 1918 when the call was issued to raise a certain amount of money, all the agencies worked together effectively.

I am reprinting a letter which I received from the Rev. E. P. Kreitler, former Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which read as follows:

War Community Camp Service
of Scranton, Pa.
November 11, 1918

Mr. A. B. Cohen, Vice-Pres.
United War Work Campaign
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

The news of this morning should be the greatest possible stimulant to the United War Work Campaign. To us, the welfare of our soldiers and sailors is vital always; in the heat of action, in the work of reconstruction, in the long months of their eagerly anticipated return.

The seven war agencies appealing for funds, are right where they ought to be — with "our boys". Not one of us would have them anywhere else. It is too late for any other organization or group of agencies engaged in social service work, to enter the field. Efficient beyond expectation they must be allowed to stay with the A.E.F. until the last man comes home. To completely meet the quota and go beyond, will be but one way by which

Scranton will proclaim her gratitude for the coming of peace, and her thanks for what "our boys" have done for us.

Faithfully yours,

/s/ E. P. Kreitler

A similar letter was addressed by the late Bishop M. J. Hoban to the late George C. Brooks, and also by the former Rabbi Lovitch of Madison Avenue Temple to William F. McGee, Secretary.

OUR PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR I

When our Government entered the war with Germany in 1917, it was with the full support of Congress and the American people and the full cooperation and backing of every social agency and religious affiliation.

I remember that about two thousand boys training in the Tank Corps were stationed in a Camp at Tobyhanna. Members representing various agencies were visiting the camp and doing everything in their power to keep the boys in good spirits.

I remember that I used to visit Tobyhanna every Wednesday with the late Louis Grass who drove his car. The agency representatives used to have mail boxes in the Tobyhanna Quarters with their names on them. The boys would drop memoranda or notes asking for advice about any problems which might occur. Louis Grass and I were very active and spent a lot of time interviewing the boys and helping to solve their problems.

On one Wednesday we arrived at Tobyhanna to find a soldier lying in front of the office in terrible pain. We asked the officer what seemed to be the matter and were told that the doctor thought he had an acute appendicitis. I asked for the doctor and I was told he was somewhere in the field, but in those days they did not have any intercommunication system and if you needed someone you had to go look for him. I asked the officer in charge to help me find the doctor. He was kind enough to provide a motorcycle with a car attached and after circling the field we found the doctor.

He had told me that he had diagnosed the case as acute appendicitis but since he was not a surgeon, he did not know what to do. He advised, however, that the soldier be taken either to Stroudsburg or Scranton. I preferred Scranton because I thought that its hospitals would have better doctors to perform the operation.

The doctor agreed with me so I telephoned the Lackawanna Hospital (as the State Hospital was called in those days) telling the superintendent to be ready for an emergency operation and asked if Dr. Smith could perform it. We were provided with an Army car (which had more room for lying down) with one of the sergeants to go along with us.

When we arrived at the hospital we found to our great satisfaction that Dr. Smith had prepared everything for the operation and was awaiting our arrival. The soldier was immediately taken to the operating room and we sat in the waiting room. After an hour or so Dr. Smith came out with a glass of pus, telling us that the appendix had almost burst, but luckily the boy's life was saved.

After the operation the soldier was placed in the ward. In those days, operations were handled differently. The patient was very nervous and suffered a great deal of pain. I asked for a private room and was told I would have to see a representative of the Red Cross, and when I asked the man in charge of the Red Cross, I was told that we would have to make up our minds that this was *WAR* and if one of the soldiers got injured or sick, he could not expect a private room.

I took exception to the ruling of the Red Cross representative. I told him we believed that while the boys were in training they should receive the best treatment possible and we would insist upon the man being provided with a private room and the Red Cross paying the bill. If the Red Cross wouldn't do it we would find a way to reimburse the hospital for the privacy this boy was going to get. The end was that the Red Cross provided a private room and assigned a nurse to stay with him until the danger was over. After three weeks in the hospital the soldier fully recovered.

The boys stationed in Tobyhanna used to spend from Saturday night until late Sunday night in Scranton or neighboring towns. Hundreds of boys came to Scranton on Saturday afternoons. In the beginning, no provision was made for them to sleep on Saturday nights as most of the boys were not able to pay for hotels and were compelled to sleep on the floor of the Y.M.C.A., Y.M.H.A., or Knights of Columbus. This happened for the first two weeks. After that the committee arranged for the boys to stay in private homes on Saturday nights. We even succeeded in having some friendly people give night keys to the boys so that they would not have to come in too early.

The Jewish Welfare Board, like other agencies arranged to give the boys a Sunday breakfast. The Y.M.H.A. acting for the Board, appointed a committee of girls, headed by Lillian Blume and Eva Cohen, to arrange a hearty breakfast for the boys. It consisted of plenty of eggs, cereal, fresh rolls and butter and jelly and plenty of coffee with cream. The wholesale tobacco establishments provided cigarettes for every boy there.

How popular the Y.M.H.A. breakfast was among the boys was demonstrated when a high-ranking officer had visited the Y.M.H.A. during the breakfast hour. Knowing that officers do not eat at the same table as the men we offered him a separate table. He thanked us kindly for our consideration, but he said that he had had his breakfast at the Hotel Casey and his reason for visiting the Y.M.H.A. during the breakfast hour was to see what the boys were having, as during the week they were always talking about the Y.M.H.A. breakfast; he wanted to see why it was so popular.

UNITED WAR FUND DRIVE

In 1918 different agencies doing welfare work united to have one drive called the United War Fund.

This was not localized, as the idea of having one drive was universal throughout the United States. The Scranton agencies organized to raise our quota of $700,000. After

many meetings the following officers were elected: the late Goerge G. Brooks, President; A. B. Cohen, Vice-President; the late William F. McGee, Secretary. I was assigned to formulate the fund-raising plan and to act as general chairman for the campaign. The drive was very successful as every member of the Lackawanna committee worked hard to raise the money.

Different plans were formulated and every one of them was successful. I remember that during the drive, the street cars were tied up on account of a strike, and we appealed to people to donate their automobiles (including themselves as drivers) to transfer people wherever they wanted to go. In those days car fare was five cents, but our rules were that whatever was handed to them over a nickel was considered a special donation. I picked up one passenger at the Hotel Jermyn to go to the 900 block of Clay Avenue and when I brought him there we had quite an argument as he gave me a five dollar bill and I refused to give him change; after explaining to him that all the money went for the United Fund he felt better about it.

We were mighty glad that while it took over a month to organize the drive, the full amount of $700,000 was raised in less than two weeks. Among the agencies participating were the U.S.O., Salvation Army, Y.M.C.A., Jewish Welfare Board and Knights of Columbus.

HEBREW DAY SCHOOL

When the Hebrew Day School was organized in 1948, it met with much opposition from members of the Jewish community who thought that the Jewish people should not segregate themselves from the rest of the people to obtain education. Their claim was that if every group should try to organize schools according to their own ideas, it would endanger the public school system where all the young people receive the same type of education without segregation.

It took almost ten years before the Hebrew Day School received recognition from practically all the Jewish com-

munity. While they agreed that not all children could attend the School, they recognized that the benefits of such an established system were many.

Children attending the public school, if they receive religious training after school, are burdened to put in one or two extra hours daily; the Hebrew Day School's hours are the same as the public school but students are taught religious as well as secular subjects, thereby giving them free afternoons.

The ten-year experience of the Hebrew Day School has been excellent. Notwithstanding the fact that students put in less hours than in the ordinary Hebrew school, it's students have accomplished more than those at many other schools. Partly because of the time schedule they approach their Hebrew studies with greater interest and intensity. The school has a program from kindergarten through elementary grades. Students attending Hebrew Day School are ready for high school immediately after completing the eight grades. They go into higher schools of Jewish learning or local high schools.

Today, after ten years of existence, the school has its own building on Monroe Avenue at an investment of $40,000, a steady enrollment of 150 scholars competently taught by twelve teachers under the supervision of Dr. Louis Nulman and Rabbi H. Guterman.

The community gives full credit to the organizers of the Hebrew Day School, mainly members of the Fink, Eisner, Harris, Mushkin and Mintz families.

Milton Eisner is now president of the school and Alex Fink is chairman of its Board of Directors.

CHAPTER XVI

MY TRIP TO EUROPE

After World War I, when Europe was ruined and relief agencies in the United States were sending money to different communities, delegates were appointed to visit the Jewish communities in Russia, Poland, Roumania, and others to make a thorough investigation and to bring back their findings so the relief organizations would know how to deal with them.

I was asked by the late Dr. Stephen S. Wise of the American Jewish Congress to go to Lithuania and to bring back a report of the real Jewish situation there. Of course, this trip was not financed by any relief organization and the necessary money was my own.

The committee that went to Europe was very anxious to be received by the various communities and to have a big fuss made over it. I told Dr. Wise and the rest of the committee that I could do a better job if I went to Lithuania to feel my own way without being influenced by any official committees. Everyone agreed with me that this would be a better way. The only way for me to get the cooperation of the various Jewish communities was for the head of the Jewish communities in Lithuania to know of my arrival. Therefore, the late Dr. Leon Muzkin cabled to Dr. Robinson in Kovna, at that time the leader of the Jewish community and also a member of the Lithuanian Parliament. The cablegram was followed by a letter to Dr. Robinson, explaining

to him my mission; it was my idea not to publish too much about the purpose of my trip.

My late wife, Ella, and I left the United States on May 30, 1925, Decoration Day. We arrived in Holland eight days later. After resting, we arranged to go from there to Kovna, with our first stop in Berlin.

In Kovna, after registering at the Metropolitan Hotel, we visited the American Consul, Mr. Carlson; it was my idea to register with the American representative in every city I visited and I had a letter from the Secretary of State introducing me to every American official.

The American Consul's office was in an old frame building. The secretary, a Lithuanian girl who was able to speak English, told me, when I asked her if I could see the Consul, that he was very busy and she asked if she could do something for me. I told her that I was from the States and I was here to pay my respects to the American Consul and that I would call again.

I had a great surprise when a young man, a member of the Consulate, approached me by saying: "Hello, A.B." I looked at him and asked: "What is the joke?" He said: "This is no joke. You are A.B. Cohen, aren't you." I said I was and asked how he knew me. He told me that he was a Scrantonian and his name was Charlie Haggerty and said he used to live at 122 Mulberry Street which is across the street from where I lived at 121. When I asked him what he was doing here, he told me that he was Vice-Consul and that I was indirectly responsible for his getting the job. He related it to me as follows: He used to deliver the Sunday papers to me and his mother called on me once asking whether I could help Charlie get a job. He told me that his mother said he would like to get a job outside of Scranton, and that I had sent him to former Congressman John R. Farr, asking him to help get a job in Washington for the boy. John R. Farr appointed him as one of the page-boys in Congress; during the war a committee consisting of a dozen or more Congressmen was visting Europe and Congressman Farr was among them. Three page-boys were taken along and Charlie was one of them; he had made himself very use-

ful to the Congressman, and with the help of the rest of the Congressional committee, Congressman Farr recommended to the State Department that he should be given a job. Finally he was assigned as Vice-Consul in Lithuania, where he then was.

He asked me if I would like to see the Consul and I told him I would, but the secretary had said he was busy. Charlie said to come along and the Consul would give me some time. He took me to the Consul's office and found that he was not busy at all, just reading a newspaper. Charlie gave me a wonderful introduction which made a great impression on Mr. Carlson. I found that in my stay in Kovna the connection with the Consul was helpful to me, particularly in procuring visas for people who were waiting to go to America.

From there I went to see Dr. Robinson, and he explained to me that the Jewish situation in Lithuania was unbearable. All the promises to the League of Nations giving the Jewish people minority rights were nothing but scraps of paper. In addition to being deprived of rights of minority, even the Department of Jewish Education and other promises by the Government had been broken. There were fights between Jewish boys and Lithuanians and the Government would not attempt to stop the atrocities being committed by the Lithuanian people. In addition he told me of a system of income tax unique in Lithuania. The merchants or the manufacturers were not asked to submit a statement of profit or loss. The Government employed appraisers who told the merchants or manufacturers how much taxes to pay, and in many instances the amount of tax exceeded their entire capital. I told Dr. Robinson about my acquaintance with the American Consul and while I hadn't told the Consul about my mission in Lithuania, I said I would be greatly obliged if he could help people obtain their visas to America; he promised to do so and those promises were kept.

I remember that when I visited the Consul, he asked me if I would like to visit the Lithuanian President. He made an appointment with me to see the President, whose name was Smetonis (after the Russian occupation in 1940, he escaped Lithuania for America and died, I believe, in Baltimore).

When I was ready to be received by the President, Mr. Carlson told me to take off my Masonic button as I was in a Catholic country and they did not like the Masons.

When I called on the President, the Lithuanian government was in its high glory and I was received with all the honors due an American citizen. Mr. Carlson told me it would be proper, since I was born and raised in Lithuania, that when I met the President, I should say nice things about what the American Jews of Lithuanian origin think of the present Lithuania. I remember that I told him: "Mr. President, I bring you the high regard and blessings of the American Jews of Lithuanian origin and wish and pray for the success of the Lithuanian government." He thanked me and said that on my return to America I should tell the American Jews of Lithuanian origin that if Lithuania had its liberty many years ago, there would be no cause for any Jew to have left Lithuania.

As the noon hour approached, I was invited to have lunch with him. There were many questions he asked about America. He was a man with a great command of the English language, as he had lived in Chicago for many years as a young man. Among the questions he asked was what the Jews in the States thought about Lithuania. I told him if he wanted me to be frank, I would tell him. "While the Jewish people are thankful for the treatment that the Jewish people are receiving in Lithuania, they can't understand how it is that the burden of taxation falls upon the Jews." He said to me: "How long are you away from Lithuania?" I told him thirty-three years. He asked me if I noticed the changes in the life of the peasant and I said I didn't know because I was not there long enough. He said to me that when I lived in Lithuania the peasant was still working in the primitive way, cultivating the land. Today, after the land had been equally divided among the peasants, there was not enough land to cultivate and peasants were obliged to use the same methods as thirty or forty years ago. The younger generation did not like to live a life of this kind and consequently they flocked to the big cities, starting a new life as manufacturers or merchants. They could not

compete with "practical Jewish brains" and the Government had to give some concession by giving free taxes for years. Therefore, the burden of taxes fell upon the Jews.

This sounded like a statement for the press, to justify the actions of the Lithuanian government toward the Jews. Of course, while I was talking to the President I could not claim that this was evidence of persecution of the Jews by the Government.

I had done a wise thing in not announcing to the Jews my mission of investigation. In fact, my own family, whom I visited in Birzai, did not know the exact purpose of my visit to Lithuania. If the people in general had become aware of the fact that I was investigating conditions, I could never have gotten to the bottom of the exact situation.

During my visits to the smaller communities, I found that the Jews were being denied their minority rights by the Government, notwithstanding the fact that all other minorities in Lithuania were getting full protection.

During my travels in Lithuanian cities, I devised a plan whereby upon arriving in a community I would not introduce myself as being there for the purpose of investigation. My first stop was to see the Rabbi of the town and from him I could learn more than from having meetings with the Jewish representatives.

I found that there was only a very small percentage of Jews engaged in small manufacturing or in small business. The majority of the Jewish people made a living by buying raw materials in the markets and re-selling them for a small profit.

What interested me most was their system of financing. They had in Kovna, the capital of Lithuania, an organization called the Central Bank and every Jewish community had an organization called Volksbank. Neither the Central nor the Volksbank had any capital. The system was unique. The Volksbank always had on hand a small amount of capital which had been collected from former loans made, and the merchants who would need, say one hundred letes (approximately ten dollars) would pay the loan with a check made payable to the Central Bank; when the check would

finally come back to the community where the borrower lived he would have enough money raised by re-selling merchandise to make good the check. I think the Federal Reserve Bank could probably take a lesson from the financial institutions of Lithuania.

After consulting with some of the officials of the Central Bank, including a Mr. Axelrod who was well known in Scranton and an official of the Central Bank, I was convinced that the J.D.C. (while they were doing excellent relief work) would help the Jewish situation in Lithuania a great deal if it could manage to make a cash deposit with the Central Bank in order to furnish some capital to the Volksbank.

Through my travels in the small communities, there was one incident which made a tremendous impression. I called on the Rabbi and asked him in an indirect way what was going on in his community and how the people were making a living. I asked him about the institutions. He said: "As far as making a living is concerned, we are so accustomed to suffering, we are carrying the burden heroically. But one thing I want you to see with your own eyes, which to us is more important than life itself. If you don't mind taking a *spazier* (walk) I want to take you through the town." He took me over to a *bode* or bathouse. I found a dilapidated building which looked like an old barn, and in front of the building was an old man smoking a pipe. The Rabbi told me: "This is our *bedder*. The Rabbi said to the old man: "Show the Americaner our *mikva.*" Inside, I found in one corner, a hole and a wooden stepladder to go down into the water. The bottom was muddy and the water was full of dirt. He said to me: "Herr Cohen, you in America probably have porcelain bath tubs and other facilities where a woman can keep herself clean. This *mikva* is the only bathing facility we have. I'm not asking you for any money, but what I would ask is, when you return to America, tell people of the conditions of our bathouse and ask them to help us to make a new *mikva.*"

"But, may I ask you what the whole thing would cost to repair?" I asked. He said: "They took it up with a man who does that work and it would cost 125 lits." This would

amount to approximately $12.50 in our money. I asked the Rabbi to send for that man as I would like to talk to him. The man who was going to do the work explained it to me. I can't repeat his explanation exactly, but actually it required a concrete flooring and an iron stepladder reinforced with concrete which they all agreed would be the best thing.

I said that I would be willing to pay the 125 lits, but they did not want to accept as they did not want me to think they took me to the bathouse to trick me. However, they finally accepted my offer with thanks. I gave them a deposit of fifty lits (five dollars) and I told them I expected to be back in that town in two weeks and would pay the balance. When I returned, the *mikva* was completed and the city was jubilantly making the dedication.

Before I left Scranton for my trip to Europe, the Penn Avenue Congregation gave me a farewell dinner which I appreciated very much. Rabbi Guterman, after wishing me a pleasant jorney, gave me five dollars to give to the Rabbi in Birzai. He asked me not to change the bill as he wanted the same one delivered.

The late Cantor Newmark, who was also there gave me five dollars, asking me to give this to the other Rabbi in Birzai, with the same instructions.

I remember that when I was in Birzai I called on Rabbi Bernstein and told him the Rabbi from Scranton, Rabbi Guterman, (by the way, he told me he remembered Rabbi Guterman from Slobodka), gave me five dollars with the request to deliver it as a gift. I was pleasantly surprised that Rabbi Bernstein, notwithstanding the fact that he wasn't on good terms with the other Rabbi from Birzai, was hesitant about taking the five dollars claiming that it wasn't fair to the other Rabbi; he suggested that he would take $2.50 and give the other Rabbi $2.50. I had to convince him that I also had five dollars for the other Rabbi.

When I called on the other Rabbi the next day and told him that I had five dollars from our Cantor, he also raised the question of why he should take the five dollars and he also suggested that he take $2.50 and give the other Rabbi $2.50. However, he too accepted the five dollars after he

was convinced that Rabbi Bernstein got five dollars also. I am relating this incident as it made a tremendous impression on me of the honesty and sincerity of the European Rabbis.

On Saturday I worshipped in the old shule where I spent my youth and I was pleasantly surprised and pleased when an old gentleman came up to me and asked me to do him the favor and honor of occupying the same seat as my Father (bless his memory) used to occupy. I accepted with thanks.

I was called to the Torah and they gave me *maftir*. I made a donation of 250 letes (twenty-five dollars) for the shule and then a special amount to the Rabbi, Cantor and the Shamas.

On Sunday two leaders of the shule, including the president, called upon me. The two men had a complaint against the President and they wanted me to be the judge and straighten out the matter. Their complaint was that after the President received the two hundred fifty letes from me, he bought some kindling wood. Their claim was that the money which I had donated was to be used to whitewash the walls and ceilings as they had not been cleaned for many years and the President had no right to buy kindling wood. I asked the two complainants what I could do in this matter. They told me that they knew he still had the money and therefore he could cancel the purchase of the kindling wood and use the money to whitewash the ceilings and walls.

The *gabbai* made the following statement. He said: "The previous winter was a very hard one and the people suffered a great deal from the cold as they didn't have any kindling wood to warm the rooms and the only place they could get a little relief from the cold was in shule, but the shule had to economize on wood and they didn't have enough either." So the President said he thought it would be a good idea to buy the kindling wood now and the walls and ceilings could wait for later.

When I asked how much it would actually cost to whitewash the walls and ceilings they told me one hundred letes or ten dollars and I had a hard job convincing them to take my verdict on their complaint as final, so I paid the additional

ten dollars for whitewashing the walls and ceilings and everybody was happy.

My trip to Europe, including the time I spent at the Zionist Congress in Vienna, (of which I wrote earlier) took almost four months.

I gave my report to the J.D.C. and my recommendation to supply a minimum of $50,000 to the Central Bank which could save the J.D.C. a lot of the money they were now spending for relief. I was mighty glad that my report was accepted and the Central Bank was furnished with capital of $50,000.

CHAPTER XVII

THE N.R.A.

When President Roosevelt was elected in 1932, he found the country at the height of the depression. Millions of people were idle. Banks were closing their doors and homeowners were losing their homes.

President Roosevelt urged Congress to pass the National Recovery Act. The President was authorized to adopt any measure which he and his advisors would find necessary to stimulate conditions in this country, thereby creating jobs for unemployed and restoring the people's confidence in the banking institutions. The act was called the National Recovery Act.

The late General Hugh Johnson was appointed to head the N.R.A. and undertake a nationwide plan to carry out its spirit.

Committees were appointed in every county in the United States to organize the N.R.A. The Chamber of Commerce sent my name to Hugh Johnson with the recommendation that I be appointed as head of the N.R.A. in Lackawanna County. A representative of General Hugh Johnson called in Scranton and I was asked to present a paper explaining why the N.R.A. was enacted. My paper, explaining the principles of the N.R.A. was as follows:

During the years of prosperity when money was plentiful and banks had large surpluses, credit was very cheap. The merchants, with prosperity prevailing and credit easy to

obtain, stocked up a greater amount than was actually needed. The consumers, too, were buying more than usual, due to the plentifulness of money.

We must not overlook the fact that during the war, we lost millions in manpower due to the young and middle-aged men being either overseas or in training camps. At the same time, commodities were in greater demand, due to the fact that we had to supply our Allies as well as our own armies, and therefore, new inventions were supplied to replace the manpower lost.

As a result of many labor-saving devices, we discovered, when it was too late, that the new machinery had thrown hundreds of thousands of men permanently out of work and that the loss of those payrolls meant a corresponding loss of buying power.

In the meantime, millions of people made money by speculation in real estate. Bank credits were easy. Mortgages were easy to obtain, and therefore, the value of real estate was greatly inflated and resulted in rents going sky high. In many instances, properties changed hands three or four times in a very short period and the last buyer was able to obtain a mortgage for a greater amount than was paid for the property by the first buyer.

In 1929, when the crash occurred, the banks were confronted with frozen assets of various kinds. One class of frozen assets consisted of stocks given as collateral. These stocks had reduced in value to much less than the original loans they represented. The value of real estate decreased, in many instances to less than the amount of the mortgage. The merchants, having big stocks on hand and the purchasing power having lessened daily, were not able to redeem their commercial papers on maturity. The inevitable result was that thousands of banks in this country were forced to close their doors.

The farm situation also became alarming throughout the country. Farmers were not able to meet taxes and interest due to the fact that they did not have a market for their products, and thousands of farmers were in danger of losing their land.

Washington was feeling in the dark for the real cause of the depression and tried to find ways to remedy it. Captains of industry were advised not to cut wages, but facing a situation where millions of people were idle and losing their markets every day, they were forced to hire cheaper help in order to create a market through reduced prices.

Next, we were advised to economize, on the grounds that one of the reasons for the depression was our post-war extravagance. The combination of these two forces brought about the following results:

1. Hundreds of thousands of people were laid off because manufacturers did not have an outlet for their merchandise.
2. In order to economize, the merchants and manufacturers reduced wages. This resulted in the further loss of buying power which, in turn, resulted in additional thousands of people being laid off.
3. Another form of economy was the lengthening of working hours which resulted in additional loss of work, since fewer people were needed to turn out the required volume of finished products. Altogether, by the end of the Hoover administration, approximately ten million people were idle.

Immediately upon assuming office, the Roosevelt administration was confronted with these problems:

1. To restore the confidence of the people in our banking situation.
2. To save the farmer from losing his property.
3. To prevent the home owner from losing his life's savings invested in a home.
4. To find work for the ten million unemployed.

To accomplish this, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the day after he was inaugurated as President of the United States:

1. Declared a bank holiday until such time as the government could examine the banking situation in this country, and to permit only those banks which were sound and safe to open. This restored the confidence of the people in our financial institutions and

prevented a nationwide and unprecedented run on the nation's banks.

2. He created the Farm Loan Board to assist the farmers in keeping their homes and land.
3. He organized the Home Loan Corporation which enabled home owners to pay mortgages within a period of fifteen years, and which prevented thousands of foreclosures by mortgages all over the country.
4. Most important of all, the President caused Congress to pass the National Recovery Act which was characterized by many of our greatest thinkers as one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of our country. The purpose of this was to provide codes governing both the employers and the employees in many industries and commercial establishments, regulating hours of employment, minimum wages, fair practices, and in fact every phase of such relations which might increase payrolls, stimulate re-employment and thereby restore the buying power of the great mass of people in the country.

Inasmuch as the formulation of the individual codes required considerable time and negotiation, the President promulgated a blanket code which all employers were requested to agree to until such time as the various individual codes could be approved.

Establishment of this code meant shortening the working hours—that is, establishing a maximum working hour and increasing wages by creating a minimum wage scale. The effect was as follows:

1. By reducing approximately twenty per cent the working hours of the twenty million working, created immediate employment for four million people.
2. The establishment of a minimum wage immediately increased the purchasing power of the people, by placing in their hands more money with which to buy.

It has been figured that the purchasing power of the four million people who were able to obtain employment on account of the decrease in working hours, together with the increase in the payrolls, created sufficient purchasing power to re-employ the six million still unemployed. This, in brief, was the purpose of the National Recovery Act.

In order to comply with both the letter and the spirit of the Act and to co-operate with our President in the tremendous task which he had undertaken, and for their own individual benefit and profit as well, every merchant and manufacturer, every employer and employee was urged to do everything within his power, not only to comply with the National Recovery Act, but to assist his community by spreading the spirit of the NRA by every means.

Only by the full and wholehearted cooperation of every member of the community could the purpose of the President's recovery program be fulfilled.

General Johnson's Committee was very much impressed with my interpretation. The system adopted by General Johnson was that whoever had been appointed to carry out the duties of the NRA was working under a military system and everyone had a certain title. I was "Adjutant General."

The first problem I had was to organize Lackawanna County and to see to it that every family should sign an obligation to patronize the "blue eagle" only. To carry this to a successful conclusion, I organized a committee of fifteen hundred men and women who conducted a three--day campaign to visit all homes and obtain the signature of the householder; according to statistics of the Scranton population, they obtained ninety per cent of the possible total.

I had done something more than my duties called for, a census of the unemployed (according to government information the number of unemployed in Scranton was over twenty thousand).

I prepared a questionnaire for unemployed persons over eighteen, asking reasons why, such as "old age," "physically unable for years" and "affected with miner's asthma." The result of this census was that almost half of those who were attributed to Scranton as unemployed were so because of

sickness, old age, etc., and therefore could not be called unemployed in the accepted sense. The result of same was very encouraging as things did not look as black as previously.

In submitting my report to NRA headquarters in Washington, I received an acknowledgment that my committee had done a perfect job, and also the following letter:

Nov. 20, 1933

Mr. A. B. Cohen
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Your letter of November 15 to General Johnson has been referred to me for reply.

I am glad to have the information in your letter. You are quite right when you say that most of the opposition or dissatisfaction with the N.R.A. is due to a lack of understanding of its principles and purposes. The plans you are taking to disseminate information are sound and are directly in line with the plans of this Bureau.

The article you have sent is excellent, well prepared and should be of great service to your speakers.

If I can be of any further service, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

/s/ Louis J. Alber
Chief, Speaker's Division

Of the fifteen hundred who were enrolled to do this work the following were outstanding:

H. N. Squier, Col. Div 1
Milton Aronsohn, Col. Div. 2
Oscar Hazleton, Col. Div. 3
Harry Apgar, Col. Div. 4
Roswell Phillips, Col. Div. 5
A. F. Golden, Col. Industrial and Commercial Divisions
John F. Durkan, Lt. Col. Industrial and Commercial Divisions
Raymond B. Gibbs
Seth W. Shoemaker
P. Anthony Sweet

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SCRANTON-LACKAWANNA JEWISH COUNCIL

As explained in the previous chapter, I organized the Kehillah in 1914 but it did not serve the real purpose which I intended when I organized it, as it filled only certain local needs.

In 1925 I had the idea of organizing a Jewish Council which would serve all the needs of the Jewish community, including those national and international institutions which were generally supported by members of our community. It was my idea that every member of the Jewish community should pay a certain amount annually in lieu of the donations or dues which he would pay to local, national or international organizations. National or international organizations sending representatives to collect money from individuals would be abolished and, instead, organizations approved by the local committees would receive the allocated amount directly.

An organization of this kind would require the cooperation of the entire community and this was the hardest job I ever undertook—the job of selling the community the idea that a system of this kind could function. It took a long time—practically nineteen years—before I succeeded in getting the consent of the community to have such an organization.

Even when I did succeed, there were still objections to

the name "Council" and we had to organize under the name "Jewish Conference."

The plan to have one drive annually, whereby every member of the Jewish community would give a yearly contribution in lieu of other dues or collections, appealed to people. The idea was that under the old system, some institutions would probably receive a greater amount, notwithstanding the fact that their needs and purposes were not as urgent as other institutions which were getting less money. It depended a great deal on the solicitor or *meshulach* who had the ability to collect money. Many times, there were two solicitors the same week—the first one would meet with greater success than the second.

The Council would also control collections and allocations as these would be supervised by committees appointed by the Scranton Council.

In 1932, I succeeded in calling the first meeting for the purpose of organizing the Council. We met at the Y.M.H.A.; I acted as temporary chairman, with the following members representing the following organizations:

Rabbi Max Arzt, I. Finkelstein—Temple Israel;
Anthony Schick, Philip Cohen—Linden St. Temple;
Jacob Horwitz, H. Judkowitz—Machzika Hadas;
Rabbi Tepfer, Alfred Rice—Madison Ave. Temple;
Joseph Biegel, M. Rothman—Penn Ave. Synagogue;
A. B. Cohen, I Salwen—Central Talmud Torah;
Mr. Schoenberg—B'nai Israel Cong. #1
Rabbi H. Guterman—Linden Street and Penn Ave.

I explained that the Jewish community in Scranton was in need of a body to regulate matters pertaining to Jewish life, such as national and international institutions in which, at the present time, we had no control whatsoever. Institutions that were worthy of receiving support were sometimes denied it. Again, there were some that were less worthy and were entitled to only a trifle but were receiving enormous amounts. I also explained that it was the opinion of people who studied the educational problem in Scranton that half the children of school age were growing up without any Jewish training at all. I called the committee's attention to

the fact that fifty or sixty per cent of the Jewish families in Scranton were not affiliated with any synagogue whatsoever and further stated that there were other branches and activities being neglected. Therefore, it was my opinion that we should succeed in organizing a body, whatever it might be called later, to represent synagogues and educational institutions, so that a great deal could be accomplished to stimulate Jewish life in Scranton.

I also informed the committee that I had invited representatives from all the synagogues and Talmud Torahs, including Providence and Dunmore, and explained the necessity of having an organization to control and supervise collections and allocations of money. I related a very interesting situation in Scranton during the first World War when everyone took it upon himself to collect money for relief and sent it to unauthorized bodies for distribution. In those days, newspapers were appealing for contributions to be sent to them for their distribution.

One particular Yiddish newspaper (notwithstanding the fact that it is no longer in existence, some relatives are still in New York, so I will call the editor Mr. M.) was very popular in Scranton so a great number of subscribers sent money for distribution directly to the editor. A rumor circulated that some newspapers were guilty of embezzlement, so we took it upon ourselves to get an account, as nearly as possible, of the monies sent to the paper mentioned above. We found that it amounted to approximately one thousand dollars. Mr. I. Finkelstein and I went to New York to visit the newspaper offices on Canal Street.

Not knowing exactly the purpose of our visit and thinking that being Scrantonians, we brought some money, we were extended much courtesy; but the minute our purpose was mentioned, the editor's attitude changed. He claimed the he was offended that he should be accused of such a crime. We asked if he had any account of the money received from Scranton, but he gave us no reply.

From there, we went to see a Mr. Arnold Kahn, who was vice-president of the State Bank on Canal Street. We received no satisfaction from Mr. Kahn who told us he remem-

bered receiving money from this particular publication, but it was not earmarked as having been from Scranton or any other community.

After thinking matters over, we decided to see an attorney who formerly practiced in Scranton, Mr. Nathan Wittawer, whom we had known very well. Mr. Wittawer was very friendly to us and pleased to see us. After we explained our case, he said he was sorry that he could not take it because the wife of the publisher was a famous actress and Mr. Wittawer was a lawyer for the Theatrical Guild. However, he said that he would call Mr. M. to tell him that a committee from Scranton was looking for an accounting of money received. He told us to wait and listen to the conversation.

Mr. Wittawer called Mr. M. on the telephone and while we could not get exactly what Mr. M. told Mr. Wittawer, from the tone of Mr. Wittawer we were convinced that he believed Mr. M. guilty of embezzlement: This is what he said:

> Two men from Scranton whom I know very well— you know I used to practice law in Scranton— were here representing the Jewish community and asking me to represent them in a case against you. Of course, I told them that I do not believe you would take money of this kind, and I advised them to forget it and go home. But I am sorry, they did not take my advice and they say that they are going to another attorney. I advise that if you have overlooked depositing the money you had better return it as they will not go home emptyhanded.

(Note: This is a true report of the conversation which Mr. Wittawer had with Mr. M. on this occasion.)

In the interval we could understand Mr. M. claiming that we were two hold-up men. We could hear Mr. Wittawer say that if he had actually deposited the money, he had no worries, but, as he understood it, if they started to investigate Mr. Kahn of the State Bank, he would have to testify to the amount he had received from Mr. M. Mr. Wittawer again told Mr. M. if he had forgotten to deposit the money, to give it to us and let us get the H--- out of New York. I presume Mr. M. asked Mr. Wittawer how he could contact

us as Mr. Wittawer told him he did not know but he thought we were stopping at the old Astor.

In conclusion, Mr. Wittawer smilingly told us we would get the money as Mr. M. was afraid. Mr. Wittawer advised us not to call on him, as he was desperate, but said he would call on us and probably tell us that we were extortionists and this was blackmail, but we should not pay any attention as we would get the money. I asked Mr. Wittawer about receiving his check, whether he could hold this as evidence claiming we received it for blackmail. Mr. Wittawer said: "Don't be afraid. That man is guilty."

Mr. M. called on us late in the afternoon. He said that if the money had not been turned over to the treasurer, it was an oversight, and his secretary gave us a check of about one thousand dollars.

When we came back from New York with the money, we called together the people who had sent the money to that publication to tell them we had the money back, and we then decided that the money should be sent to New York to the People's Relief. This was the first relief organization in New York and was comprised of very respectable people.

Later on, another organization was formed in New York called the Central Relief. At a later date, the two relief organizations were merged and re-organized under the name of the Jewish Distribution Committee (J.D.C.).

While my report was very lengthy and probably, on the face of it, looked as though it was not very important, I was surprised to learn afterwards that knowledge of this case helped a great deal in organizing the Council.

The committee appointed formulated a plan whereby the Council should conduct an annual drive for the purpose of providing funds for the J.D.C., U.J.A. and other worthy national and international organizations which heretofore looked to the Scranton community for some support.

It also included plans to provide funds for the Jewish Home, Montefiore Hebrew School and any other local organizations which would conduct drives for membership.

The report of the committee was accepted and an organization called the Jewish Conference (later changed to

the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council) was formed; application for a charter was made in order to legalize all the collections and officers were elected.

However, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, this took nineteen years; it was finally organized in 1944 and the first officers elected were as follows:

A. B. Cohen, chairman; David Landau, vice-chairman; Mrs. Pauline Mack, vice-president; George Joel, secretary.

Today, as I write my memoirs of the history of the Council, the following organizations are affiliated in it:

Amos Lodge B'nai B'rith; Bichor Cholem—Olyphant; B'nai B'rith Women; B'nai Israel Cong.; Central Talmud Torah; Hadassah B & P; Hebrew Orthodox Center; Israel Lodge—Odd Fellows; Jewish Community Center; Jewish Federation; Jewish Home; Jewish War Veterans; Jewish Workers Alliance; Junior Hadassah; Linden Street Temple; Madison Avenue Temple Congregation; Mid-Valley Lodge B'nai B'rith; Mizrachi; Mizrachi Women; Ohev Zedek Cong.; Penn Avenue Synagogue; Providence Synagogue; Senior Hadassah; Strivers; Temple Israel; Temple Israel Congregation—Dunmore; Tikvah Rebekah Lodge #68; Workmen's Circle Branch #112; Young Israel of Scranton; Zionist Organization, and Hebrew Day School.

Our annual fund-raising has been very successful, even exceeding $500,000 one year, and this is being distributed in a very systematic manner through an allocations committee consisting of one member of each of the above affiliated organizations.

The prestige and influence of the Council is felt by the entire community.

This is considered a major accomplishment; while the Council does not function one hundred percent, it is impossible for any organization or form of government to have any program lived up to entirely. However, instead of supporting fifty organizations and having drives for each one, our one annual drive supports practically every organization which appeals for help.

We have raised, since the first emergency drive in 1918, $5,317,965.45.

With the cooperation of the late Samuel Samter, I. E. Oppenheim and Ralph Levy, I have had the privilege of be-

ing in charge and formulating plans and organizing teams for the United Jewish Appeal drives from 1918, with the exception of fifteen years, those drives being conducted by:

Harry Grossinger and H. Nogi
Harry Dickstein and Julius Levy
Emanuel Laster
Henry Nogi
Leo M. Levy
Richard Oppenheim
Harry Spiegel
Morris Gelb
Arthur Horowitz and Bertram Linder
M. L. Hodin and Harry Klein
Irving Harris and Milton Aronsohn
Joseph Harris and Nat Levy
Gus Weinberger
David Fiegelman and A. I. Gross
Bert Mushkin

with the able assistance of George Joel, Executive Director.

The goodwill and prestige of the Council and the confidence which people place in it are illustrated by the following facts:

1. When we completed the Y.M.H.A. we had to borrow $16,500 from the Scranton Lackawanna Trust Company; notwithstanding the fact that we had already invested in the Wyoming Avenue property about $75,000, we could not raise a mortgage on the $16,000 unless an agreement would be made with the Trust Company that the personnel of the Board of Directors not be changed until the entire amount of money was paid.

2. When the Temple needed a loan of $100,000 from the First National Bank the investment was already about $200,000; still the bank would not take our mortgage unless the Board of Directors of Temple Israel, consisting of twenty-one members, would guarantee the loan with their personal endorsements.

3. The strength of the Council was felt in 1954 when the Israel Government asked for a loan from the Jewish people of the United States of $75,000,000 and the Scranton community was asked to raise $200,000.

The Third National Bank granted a loan of $200,000 to the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council with no personal endorsement but only with the signature of the President and Secretary of the Lackawanna Jewish Council. This was considered one of our milestones.

CHAPTER XIX

THE JEWISH HOME

The Jewish community of Scranton had problems finding foster homes for orphaned children as it was impossible to do so in the city.

About 1912 we had three orphans to be placed, so Mr. Isadore Finkelstein and I went to Philadelphia to make arrangements with the Jewish Orphans Home there to recognize Scranton as a branch; they accepted the three orphaned children with the understanding that we would contribute approximately $1,000 a year, and if more children were to be placed in Philadelphia, financial arrangements would be made accordingly.

We also had a problem of what to do with the aged people who required a place to live. Philadelphia would not accept old people from Scranton; neither would New York

In 1915 a group of women headed by the late Mrs. Selma Stark called a meeting of women including Emma Kilberg, Bertha Phillips, Anna Folk and others interested in providing a home for the orphans and the aged.

A charter was obtained in July 1916, and a home was purchased in 1921 from the old Weston Estate, corner of Spring Street and North Main Avenue. The building was a three-story brick and stone structure with sixteen rooms.

A temporary Board of Directors was elected in January 1922, with the late Max Blume as chairman. The first permanent Board was elected in May 1922, with Dr. Aaron S.

Cantor as chairman and Attorney Jerome I. Myers as first vice-president.

During the years up to 1929, executive directors were changed from time to time; then Mrs. Rose (Chenetz) Silverman was elected executive secretary. During her administration, thirty-three children were housed in the Home, and also about thirteen aged people. The Home became famous and there were many visitors who saw how well the children and aged were cared for. It was through Mrs. Silverman's influence that the late Meyer Davidow contributed money from time to time, and left $25,000 in his will for maintenance of the new building.

The present Home is situated at 712 Harrison Avenue under the management of Mrs. Roselyn Burnett Kerber, who has supervised it for the past ten years; she is doing an excellent job, which pleases the Board of Directors in its entirety.

The Home has benefitted greatly from the several chairmen of its Board of Directors: Dr. A. S. Cantor held the chairmanship for twenty-five years, succeeded by Morris Goodman, James B. Rosenfeld, Dr. H. M. Mittelman, Samuel Mittelman and now Irving Harris.

The Home is not limited to Scranton residents. In fact, it takes persons from Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, and also some aged men and women from the neighboring communities.

Until 1952, the Home was maintained by membership dues and admission income from the aged who were able to pay. In 1952, the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council and Wyoming Valley Council began subsidizing membership dues for approximately $8,000 a year. For the past few years the Home has been able to manage without any subsidy from Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

The investment for the present Home is approximately $40,000 and its budget is about $45,000 annually.

CHAPTER XX

THE SCRANTON GOOD WILL COMMITTEE

There have been no prolonged major strikes in Scranton during the past twenty-two years but, nevertheless, the city's industrial expansion program has been badly hampered by the unwarranted and entirely false reputation it somehow acquired as being a hotbed of labor troubles.

The national publicity attendant upon the long coal strikes of 1926 and 1928 was largely blamed for the widespread misconception of constant labor strife in Scranton and vicinity. The outside world was extremely sensitive to minor, ordinary work stoppages in Scranton—stoppages which in other cities attracted none of the spot-light glare of publicity.

Perhaps because of this obstacle to the city's industrial rehabilitation, Scranton's thinking citizens saw the need for such an organization as the Good Will Committee.

I became interested in labor problems during the time I was serving as chairman of the N.R.A. in 1933, and that gave me an inside picture as to what was going on.

I attempted many times to take this matter up with the Chamber of Commerce—to stimulate harmony between management and labor. As I have always said, when a strike happens, it is not always a controversy between management and labor; the people in general are also interested as they are paying the penalty of labor unrest.

I succeeded in organizing a group of people who were interested "to advance the economic interests of Scranton by promoting and maintaining industrial harmony."

The following attended the first meeting:

A. B. Cohen, John H. Devine, Walter W. Rehrig, Martin D. Linder, Dr. Robert D. Kreitler, John Greiner, Jr., Seth W. Shoemaker, Dr. Max Arzt, Rev. E. P. Caulfield, M. L. Goodman, John D. Hinton, Thomas Murphy, I. E. Oppenheim, M. J. O'Toole, Frank D. Schroth, Ralph E. Weeks, L. H. Watres and Willis W. Jones.

The following officers were named:

A. B. Cohen, Chairman; John H. Devine, Vice Chairman; Walter W. Rehrig, Vice Chairman; Martin D. Linder, Vice Chairman; Dr. Robert W. Kreitler, Vice Chairman; John Greiner, Jr., Vice Chairman; and Seth W. Shoemaker, Secretary.

In addition the following were appointed to the executive committee:

Dr. Max Arzt, Rev. E. P. Caulfield, M. L. Goodman, John D. Hinton, Thomas Murphy, I. E. Oppenheim, M. J. O'Toole, Frank D. Schroth, Ralph E. Weeks, L. H. Watres, Willis W. Jones, and Attorney Norman Harris, legal advisor.

As a result of this gathering a permanent organization came into being under the name of the "Good Will Committee" and the object of the committee was to settle labor problems by injecting "good will"; I was mighty glad that during my thirteen years as chairman of the Good Will Committee we settled 250 labor controversies and millions of dollars was saved for the community.

During my administration we had a lot of problems confronting us, but we were always in a position to apply the Good Will system and we were able to bring both sides of the problem to a satisfactory conclusion. The committee's actions, always impartial, gained the confidence of the unions. We also had the confidence of the regional labor department whereby we were permitted to have elections and our findings were recognized by the department.

Every case was very interesting, as our methods of not

arbitrating but injecting good will and having both parties agree upon a friendly basis required a lot of work.

It is impossible for me to describe all the cases we handled, but I want to mention a few which are indelible in my mind.

MY FIRST CASE

This plant employed hundreds of workers, not unionized. They were having lots of labor trouble and decided to move to a different locality. The union decided to lay off calling a strike until they moved to a new plant. Before they were actually settled in their new location the union called a strike demanding management recognize the Amalgamated Union. We offered our assistance but management refused, claiming they could manage their own affairs.

The Labor Department in Washington sent one of its representatives to mediate between management and the union. I called on the labor representative asking where I could assist him in settling the controversy. He refused any assistance, claiming he could take care of it by himself—however, he would not object to my being present if I did not interfere.

We called upon the plant and found that the union was not represented (management did not recognize it) as union representation would indicate indirect recognition.

The employees submitted a great number of demands, starting with recognition of the union, forty-hour work week, the check-up system and a number of minor demands.

I asked the labor representative, "How are you going to start?" He said from the top: recognition of the union. I told him that I would not interfere, but if he started from recognition of the union he would not go any further. He said to me, "How would you start?" I said, "From the bottom, which can be settled easily; leave the big ones for the last." He did not entertain my remarks and claimed he had been with the labor department twenty-three years and knew his business. The end was that after wrangling with manage-

ment for two hours he did not make any headway. Management told him that if they recognized the union they wouldn't need help from the labor department in Washington.

We left the plant with the understanding of meeting the following day. The representative was going to call a taxi to take him back to the hotel. I offered to take him in my car, but like Moses who led the people from Egypt to Israel, which took forty years (though we could make it in three days), in order to get better acquainted with him, instead of taking him to the hotel (which should take ten minutes) I drove him through Minooka and Hyde Park. That gave me more time with him and I told him about the plans of the Good Will Committee. He did not say anything and when we got to the hotel we said goodbye.

Next morning he called at my office and whether true or false, he told me he had received an urgent call to go to Allentown immediately and therefore he asked me to take this matter over and said he would be satisfied with any action I would take.

"The Happy Ending"—After meeting with management for many days we succeeded in settling all the problems; the union was recognized with terms very agreeable to both parties.

* * *

I remember the Scranton Dry Goods Company strike in which an election took place to find out the wishes of the majority.

The committee in charge of the election was, beside myself as chairman, Thomas F. Murphy and one representative of the union. The election took place in the old Elrich store, 514 Lackawanna Avenue, which was vacant.

The Scranton Dry Goods Company submitted to us a list of all employees and to avoid any controversy we had the Scranton Dry and the union sign every page.

I remember that one woman came around and asked for a ballot. On consulting the list of names, we couldn't find hers. She claimed she took the place of her daughter and she is now one of the permanent employees of the Scranton Dry. I refused to give her a ballot. The union challenged our sin-

cerity in holding the election, claiming that valid employees were refused ballots. The Regional Labor Department of Philadelphia held a meeting in Attorney Charles P. O'Malley's office. Charges were brought against me as being unfair in handling the election. After I explained exactly what transpired the labor committee approved our action and the charges were denied.

* * *

I had another case in which the Royal Miss plant was on strike and we couldn't accomplish anything by bringing the two parties together in Scranton, as we were told that the strike was called on order of Mr. Dubinsky. I succeeded in having Mr. Dubinsky agree to have the hearing in his office. I arranged a meeting, taking along a committee of five, which included Father Caulfield, John Greiner and a few others, and after meeting from two in the afternoon until six o'clock, we came back with better terms than we anticipated.

* * *

Another case which I remember very well was a strike in a big shoe plant. Our service was refused by the management, claiming it was in the hands of their attorney, Mr. Seligman, who was the lawyer for the shoe industry.

I can recall one day when Mr. Seligman phoned me asking whether we could help him settle the shoe strike in Scranton. I told him that we would be very glad to take a hand in it but with the understanding that we would handle it in our own way, without any interference from the lawyers of either side. They were satisfied to leave this in our hands but he wanted to be present. We told him the meeting would be public and he could be present if that was his wish. After meeting a whole day with both sides, we settled the strike with both sides very pleased.

Mr. Seligman was so amazed at the way we handled the matter that he asked us if we could help him in settling labor trouble which he had in Brooklyn, New York. Of course, we told him we were not on the payroll of either side and that we were only handling local matters.

* * *

I remember a case where my decision was challenged.

This concerned the Condenser Manufacturing Company, and both sides agreed to an election to see whether the union had the majority. The election was held in the Chamber of Commerce and a certain man was challenged by management which claimed that while he was still working for the company, he had resigned and was going to work for a concern in New Jersey. I sustained their challenge and refused to allow that man to participate in the election.

Charges were brought against me by the Regional Labor Department—this case was very important to the union as it lost by one vote. A hearing was called by the Department in the Chamber of Commerce and I was called to explain why I refused to allow a union man to vote. The union claimed that it was true he had resigned from the Condensor Company but the fact that he was still employed made him entitled to participate. My claim was that his vote was denied because he was not going to be employed under the new contract. My opinion was sustained.

Every case which we handled had certain interesting problems but of course it is impossible to describe them all.

TWIN GRILL

The Twin Grill, owned by Chris Colovos, employed sixty-seven people as kitchen service and waiters. The employees refused to join the union as they claimed that working conditions were very satisfactory; therefore, they organized their own association. In lieu of paying dues into the union, they paid same to their own association.

The union was trying its utmost to organize them but it was not successful. They put up a line of pickets in a unique way to attract the public's attention—they had clowns passing back and forth with funny signs. The signs did not read in the usual ways, ("This establishment is unfair to organized labor"), but said, "The employees of this establishment are not affiliated with the Waiter's Union."

The Good Will Committee did everything it could to bring management and union together but Mr. Colovos said if the employees would join the union, he'd be willing to sign

a contract, but the employees refused to join the union.

The Good Will Committee was particularly interested in eliminating the nuisance which the pickets created in Central City.

I called on the Secretary of Labor, Mr. Louis G. Hines, in Harrisburg, for advice. Mr. Hines was extremely friendly to the Scranton committee and particularly the Good Will Committee. He told me while he felt that the union was unfair to the employees and the community, not having any police power, he could not stop it.

He advised me to talk this matter over with Attorney N. Herbert Syme, who was formerly the attorney for the unions. In order to get the advice of Mr. Syme, we sent him an invitation to address the Good Will Committee in Scranton.

Mr. Norman Harris, who was legal advisor to the Good Will Committee, and I conferred with Mr. Syme while he was in Scranton, and he advised us that the only way to stop the picketing was to get a court injunction. He told us that signs announcing to the public that the establishment was unfair to organized labor could not be stopped as court would consider this public information. However, an injunction should be asked by the employees. They should state in their petition that it was not their desire to affiliate themselves with the union. The public minconstrued the reading of the sign to mean that "the employees refused to affiliate themselves with the union" and the employer claimed he was losing a lot of business on account of that; he was trying to force them to join the union which was in itself against the labor law.

The result was that before this matter reached court for a decision, the union agreed to withdraw pickets for a period of six months at which time it felt that the employees would join the union.

Upon expiration of the six months, Mr. Colovos was notified that the representative of the union would arrive in Scranton the following day, claiming he had the employees' consent to join the union.

Attorney Russell O'Malley, representing Mr. Colovos, told us that he knew for a fact that the union had not succeeded

in having the employees join. We told Mr. Colovos to arrange a meeting with the union representative for the following evening and we would like to have all the employees present at the meeting. The meeting was held at nine o'clock in the evening at the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Colovos was present with about sixty of his sixty-seven employees. Mr. O'Malley was also present.

I opened the meeting and explained to both sides that the question of Mr. Colovos signing the contract depended on the wishes of the employees, as the employer had no right to compel employees to join the union. The union representative claimed that all the employees were satisfied to join the union, at which time Mr. O'Malley asked for an election. The union representative said that he had no objections to an election.

After both sides agreed on an election, I told them that we had the ballot box ready and ballots printed. The union representative was surprised, asking how it was I had ballots. I said, "When a doctor is called to see a patient he takes along a thermometer to measure the temperature, so when we are called into a labor dispute and where there is a question of whether the employees wish to belong to a union or not, the only way to measure it is to have a ballot printed and ready."

The election was held in a very orderly manner and in order to avoid any arguments as to the result I suggested they should elect a chairman of the election. Mr. O'Malley waived the right of the employer to appoint a representative and he said they were willing to have the union appoint the two representatives.

After the two were appointed, they named me as chairman, which I also waived, and I suggested that the third man should also be a member of the union. The result of the election was fifty-three not to affiliate with the union and seven abstaining.

In 1941, the Secretary of Labor of the State of Pennsylvania, Mr. Louis G. Hines, requested Chairman A. B. Cohen to send a committee to meet with him and a group of representatives of industry and labor at his office in Harrisburg, to explain the Scranton system. I appointed the late Michael J.

O'Toole to represent the Good Will Committee. I quote from Mr. O'Toole's report as follows:

"Representatives were present from most of the leading industries and other enterprises of the State. Secretary Hines outlined the purposes of the Conference and then entered into an extended laudation of the work of the Scranton Good Will Committee, finally calling on Mr. O'Toole as the first speaker to explain its work. This was done and what was practically a 100% favorable record in the adjustment of labor disputes shown. These citations caused such a favorable feeling for the work of our Committee that several requests were made at once for additional detailed information so that other Good Will Committees could be formed."

In 1939, the work became so heavy, taking practically all of my time, that I sent my resignation to the Chamber of Commerce. As a result, the late Ralph E. Weeks called a special committee meeting and a letter which he addressed to the late Worthington Scranton is self-explanatory.

Scranton, Penna.
August 15, 1939

Mr. Worthington Scranton,
800 Linden Street,
Scranton, Penna.

Dear Worth:

You were absent from the last Good Will Committe meeting in which you were asked to participate. I therefore, want to report to you the result of the special meeting.

In going over the records of the Good Will Committee under the leadership of A. B. Cohen, who has for nearly six years rendered a valuable service to this community, many industrial disputes have been adjusted in a fair and friendly manner and many hundreds of dollars in payrolls have been saved for this community.

While others have assisted in the work of the committee, the chairman deserves most of the credit for what he has accomplished. Members who realize what Mr. Cohen has done and is doing suggested that he should receive $3,000 to reimburse him for the time that he has given as chairman. Mr. Cohen was called in by the committee and it was explained to him that the committee appreciates highly his efforts and therefore, they intend to recommend to the Chamber of Commerce, that he should be reimbursed with the amount of $3,000.00.

However, Mr. Cohen will not accept a penny. He insists that a chairman of such a committee and indeed, the committee itself,

would be handicapped if any member received pay for his services.

I thought you would be interested in the outcome of the meeting and for that reason I am submitting this report.

Yours truly,

/s/ Ralph Weeks.

REW:L

Mr. Weeks reported the result to the Board of Directors of the Good Will Committee and at the end of it I consented to withdraw my resignation and continued the work until 1947.

* * *

Here is an interesting case in which the entire public was concerned and the quick action of the Good Will Committee brought to a conclusion the strike of the street car lines in 1945.

The Scranton Transit Company employees, in the early part of June, 1945, called a strike, and all transportation to defense plants as well as to suburbs was at a standstill.

We negotiated with Mr. H. H. Dartt, President of the Scranton Transit Company and Mr. M. H. O'Neill, President of Local 168, Amalgamated Streetcar Operators and Bus Operators Union, trying our utmost to bring the two parties together to effect a settlement. We met with no success as the Union refused to meet unless a contract was signed first.

On June 10th, I called a meeting of the city representatives consisting of Howard Snowdon, Mayor of Scranton; John Durkin, former Mayor of Scranton; O. E. McGregor, President of the Chamber of Commerce; P. Anthony Sweet, President of Better Business Bureau; Tom Connor, Editor of the *Scranton Tribune;* William McGrath, Central Labor Union; Ralph Weeks, International Correspondence Schools. I also addressed the following letter to the President of the Transit Company and to the President of the Union:

Gentlemen:

In the public interest, we urge you to meet at the Providence Carbarn of the Scranton Transit Company, or at some other place that is mutually satisfactory for the purpose of starting car and bus operation and negotiations simultaneously, it being understood and agreed that all differences between the Transit Company

and the Union that are not settled within 48 hours immediately thereafter, shall be referred to a group of three persons, one to be selected by the Union, one by the Transit Company and one by the War Labor Board.

It is further understood and agreed that in the event that the services of a group of three persons as referred to above is required, any decisions made by them shall be final and binding upon both parties subject to the approval of the proper Federal agencies.

Scranton Good Will Committee
/s/ A. B. Cohen, Chairman
Howard Snowdon
John Durkin
Thomas F. Connor
O. E. McGregor
Wm. J. McGrath
P. Anthony Sweet
Ralph Weeks
Seth Shoemaker.

However, the Union still refused to meet so on the 11th of June, we sent a telegram to our Congressman, John W. Murphy, which read as follows:

Hon. John W. Murphy,
1518 House Office Building,
Washington 26, D.C.

Confidential

In the interest of our community we would deeply appreciate it if you would promptly contact the Government agency or agencies that has or have jurisdiction independently or jointly of the Street Railway and Bus transportation tie-up in Scranton and Lackawanna County for the purpose of urging that agency or those agencies to use their good offices in effecting an immediate settlement. If a settlement could be achieved locally and voluntarily would this be satisfactory or does the present status preclude this possibility. Suggest you invite cooperation of Senators Guffey and Myers.

/s/ A. B. Cohen, Chairman,
Scranton Good Will Committee.

Congressman Murphy telephoned us suggesting that we send a telegram to President Truman stating that owing to the fact that some of the plants were doing government work and because of the strike were actually at a standstill, he

should appeal for the buses to start running and negotiations for a contract be made later.

Following the suggestion of Congressman Murphy, we addressed a telegram to the President on June 13, 1945, which read as follows:

Honorable Harry S. Truman, President,
United States of America
White House
Washington, D.C.

In the name of the war effort and the public well-being in Scranton and the Lackawanna Valley, we herewith urge you in your capacity as Commander-in-chief to issue forthwith an appeal to the members of Local 168, Amalgamated Ass'n of Street Car and Motor Coach Operators, Scranton, Pa., Michael L. O'Neill, Pres. 116 Adams Ave. to return to their posts immediately thereby resuming vitally needed public transportation. As a group of citizens who have been endeavoring in every constructive way to break the deadlock between the management and the men, we are confident that an appeal from you would be honored by the men and would compose a situation that cries for correction. It is understood that in acting favorably upon your request the men in question would do so without prejudice to their rights and that upon the immediate resumption of work the agencies of government with jurisdiction would begin at once to process the case. We are confident you can bring about a happy conclusion of this prolonged tieup and in so doing would be performing a service that would have favorable national repercussions.

Respectfully,

/s/ A. B. Cohen, Chairman,
Scranton Good Will Committee
Howard Snowdon, Mayor
John Durkin, Former Mayor
O. E. McGregor
P. Anthony Sweet
Tom Connor
Wm. McGrath
Ralph Weeks

On June 14th, Mr. Hurley, President Truman's secretary, called us on the telephone, acknowledging the telegram and asking whether management and union would yield to the President's request. I immediately contacted Mr. Dartt, President of the Transit Company and his answer was that

he would be very glad to comply with the President's request, but the Union refused to do so.

We notified Mr. Hurley that the union was not in favor of going back to work unless a contract was made. We asked Mr. Hurley whether or not the government would intervene now to take over the line and start negotiations for a settlement afterward. As a result of this request, the government took over the line the next day, effective 12:01 midnight.

The action of the government ordering the street car lines to resume operation met with the approval of the general public. As long as the street car lines were running regularly and people were not handicapped by lack of transportation, we did not interest ourselves in the arrangements made between management and labor.

In April, 1950, I tendered my resignation to the Chamber of Commerce and asked to be relieved of my obligation and responsibility to the Good Will Committee.

The Chamber of Commerce at a special meeting, accepted my resignation with regret and set that day as "A. B. Cohen Day."

The former president of the University of Scranton, Reverend Eugene Gallery, heading a committee led by William W. Scranton and Gordon Evans, presented a certificate of merit to me which reads as follows:

THE SCRANTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AWARDS TO A. B. COHEN

This Certificate of Merit and Congratulations
in Recognition of
devoted service to his community as Chairman of the Goodwill Committee now known as the Labor Management Committee.

Your Chamber of Commerce Salutes you on the Occasion of Your Achievement, and Recognizes the Service Given by Your Organization to This Community. We Want you to Know That We are Proud of Having you as One of Our Outstanding and Loyal Members.

William J. Raeder, President
Willis W. Jones, Executive Sec.

In writing the history of the Good Will Committee and its activities in settling labor difficulties in Scranton, I submitted my report to Attorney Russell O'Malley. His reply was as follows:

Mr. A. B. Cohen
Connell Building
Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

The Lord certainly showered many blessings upon you and not the least of these is your excellent memory.

The Twin Grill labor election occurred almost eight years ago and the two major facts that stand out in my memory are (1) your fortunate intervention, and (2) the successful result. Your detailed recollection as set forth in the enclosed statement substantially agrees in all respects with my recollection as refreshed by your statement.

Sincerely,

/s/ Russell O'Malley,
NOGI, O'MALLEY & HARRIS.

RJO:vb
Encl.

In concluding this chapter I quote letter received from Willis W. Jones, Executive Vice President of the Scranton Chamber of Commerce:

A. B. Cohen,
835 Connell Building,
Scranton, Pa.

Dear A. B.:

In our association on many projects in connection with the community and the Chamber of Commerce, the one that I recall most vividly and associate you with more intimately is the work of the Goodwill Committee.

Many people of recent date have inquired, "Why doesn't Scranton pattern itself after the Toledo Labor Management Plan?" As you well know, the facts of the matter are that Toledo did much of its patterning after the Scranton Goodwill Plan in the early '30's.

During this period of growing up, especially in the textile industry, it was evident there was a clear need for bringing some understanding between labor and management for there was continuous "upbreaking," especially at times of negotiating a contract.

Your help to this industry was invaluable. The number of hours that were saved for labor and management in this field would amount to an asset of great worth. How fully I recall your ability to get complete faith and understanding from both management and labor and to get them to present their problems in a forthright manner.

I recall so many instances when time and time again you have performed miracles, especially in the work of labor-management relations. I am convinced that the contribution you have made has had far reaching good effects and can never be measured or repaid to you.

My fondest hope is that while we are both alive we will see a rebirth of a labor-management effort that will bring peace, goodwill, and understanding in this field in our area.

I hope that you will soon complete your memoirs so that we may have a catalogue of your activities so that we may have the past as a prologue to the future.

Sincerely,

/s/ Willis

WWJ/eh

Willis W. Jones, Exec. Vice Pres.

CHAPTER XXI

EMERGENCY AMBULANCES

In the Spring of 1948, my former secretary, Mary Lavelle, told me that while her cousin was acting as an altar boy his surplice caught on fire and he was severely burned. He lay on the sidewalk for over half an hour before they could get an ambulance; they finally were obliged to bring him to the hospital in a truck.

I wondered why it was that the hospitals could not serve properly in emergency cases. I thought I would check with the hospitals, particularly the State Hospital, as to why they could not give better service.

My first check on the hospital, I remember, was as follows: there was a call for an emergency ambulance; the interne got busy immediately. He was ready with his bag and instruments to answer the call. Just for the record, I was timing him, and it was fifteen minutes before they got the ambulance ready to leave. To my question as to why the delay, I was told that the person who was operating the ambulance was the general handyman, doing other work besides driving the ambulance, so when the handyman was not handy, the patient had to wait.

I called at City Hall and spoke to the Director of Public Safety and asked him why we value property more than human life. The city was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to maintain an efficient fire department, but not

one dollar was set aside to save lives. I explained to the Director what transpired in bringing the altar boy to the hospital; I also told him about my experience at the State Hospital.

Why couldn't the city maintain an ambulance service to bring in emergency cases speedily as our fire fighters speedily answered calls to extinguish fires?

The Director told me that the city had no appropriations for emergency ambulances as this would entail $10,000 or more annually and the Council would not go along with making such an appropriation.

I called a meeting of public-spirited men to whom raising money for an ambulance would appeal. The meeting consisted of the following:

Nathan Levine, Colonial Togs
Walter Kramer, First National Bank
William Lonsdorf, Director of Public Safety
Thomas Evans, Chief of Fire Department
R. F. Kelly, Assistant Fire Chief
Welrose Colvin, Lieutenant, Fire Department
Lawrence W. Tice, I.C.S.
Gordon Evans, Lewis & Reilly, Inc.
Judge M. J. Eagen
Theodore Koppelman, Lackawanna Pants Mfg. Co.

I explained to them that the purpose of the meeting was to help formulate plans of how money could be raised to purchase an ambulance. They agreed that all efforts should be made to do so. The following officers were elected:

A. B. Cohen, chairman
Walter Kramer, vice-chairman
Gordon Evans, co-chairman
Judge M. J. Eagen, treasurer
Lawrence W. Tice, secretary

It was agreed that the name of the organization would be the Emergency Ambulance Fund-Raising Committee.

After spending many months soliciting money, we raised $8,000, and an ambulance equipped with all facilities for saving lives was purchased and put into service in January, 1948. The city agreed to maintain the ambulance in the Fire

Headquarters and assigned six men specially trained by the Red Cross to care for its emergency operation.

In 1954 I was asked by the Mayor to provide funds for a new ambulance as the present one was getting old after being constantly in use since 1948—running over 100,000 miles and answering 11,788 calls.

I called a meeting of the following men: Chief William Morgan, Henry W. Gann, Thomas F. Murphy, Walter Kramer, Lawrence W. Tice, Robert V. Horger, Ted Rodgers, Sr., P. Anthony Sweet, Lt. Arthur Heightmen, John J. O'Connell, Walter L. Schautz, William Lonsdorf, and Herman S. Goodman and explained the need for another ambulance. At that first meeting we decided that an ambulance with a greater capacity than the previous one would cost approximately $15,000. It was suggested that in addition to the ambulance there should be other facilities installed, such as an extended lighting system (a generator installed on a small truck to generate electricity to illuminate a whole block without bulbs); also special electrical equipment with electric saws to be used in case of an emergency, extra-large jacks for the rescue squad, and walkie-talkies for the firemen.

The people answering our calls for money were wonderful and over $30,000 was raised to provide an ambulance much larger than the first one, able to carry four patients to the hospital in an emergency, and with additional equipment. In fact, the present ambulance is the best-equipped ambulance in the State of Pennsylvania.

When we ordered the new ambulance, we had planned to sell the old one, but the Committee decided it would be worthwhile to spend $2,000 to put in new parts and today, we have the two ambulances. One follows the Fire Department to stand by in case of an emergency and the other one is used for the usual hospital calls. The new ambulance was put into operation on May 26, 1955, and up to November, 1957, they both had made 17,400 calls.

We received a letter from Mayor Hanlon which reads as follows:

Mr. A. B. Cohen, Chairman
Emergency Ambulance Fund
1000 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, Pa.
Dear Mr. Cohen:—

You will find enclosed herewith a copy of a Resolution passed by the City Council in connection with the Ambulance recently presented to the City of Scranton, by the outstanding group of public spirited citizens of which you are the Chairman.

The magnanimous gesture made by your group in presenting the Ambulance to the City will never be forgotten. I know I voice the sentiments of every man, woman and child within our boundaries when I say that the gift is greatly appreciated.

As you know, the public press has already reported many instances where the Ambulance has been called into service on missions of mercy, to the relief and aid of those immediately affected. This certainly is to the credit of your group, the vision of which has definitely been proven.

The citizens of our great City will never forget this gift and it is with a feeling of pride that we watch this beautiful Ambulance traversing our City streets while on its way to relieve the distressed, the sick or the unfortunate.

Voicing the feelings of a grateful community, I remain,

Respectfully yours,
/s/ James T. Hanlon
Mayor

On May 18, the following resolution was passed:

RESOLUTION
no. 8964

WHEREAS, a committee composed of a group of civic-minded citizens of the City of Scranton desires to present to the City of Scranton a new ambulance replacing the ambulance that is presently in operation,

WHEREAS, the City of Scranton is greatly appreciative to this this committee for presenting this new ambulance to the City of Scranton so that its errands of mercy may be continued,

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Council of the City of Scranton that the said ambulance be accepted by the City of Scranton and that title thereto be taken in the name of "City of Scranton," "Bureau of Fire, Department of Public Safety," and a letter of appreciation be sent to the chairman of the committee.

Approved May 18, 1955
JAMES T. HANLON, MAYOR
SAM DRUCK, City Clerk
By: Frank DeSarro
Assistant City Clerk

We received a letter from the Lackawanna Medical Society dated September 14, 1954, which read as follows:

Mr. A. B. Cohen, Chairman
Emergency Ambulance Fund Campaign
Connell Building
Scranton, Pa.

The current campaign for funds to provide a new ambulance for the emergency service of the Scranton Fire Department affords an opportunity to express appreciation of this service and commend it to the end that the public response will be a most generous one. Prompt dispatch of injured or sick persons to our hospitals in many cases meets a vital need; when this service is available throughout the day and night the emergency hospital transportation carries assurance to any who may require it.

Public expression of approval and appreciation will undoubtedly be shown in generous and widespread contributions in the present campaign.

Sincerely yours,

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MTO:RJ

(Unanimously endorsed by the membership of the Lackawanna County Medical Society at its business meeting September 14, 1954.)

The purchasing committee consisting of Robert V. Horger, John J. O'Connell and Gordon Evans, did a marvelous job in giving much time and in obtaining the best ambulance possible for the money spent.

A bronze plaque with the name of all contributors of $50.00 or more has been placed in the Fire Headquarters in perpetual appreciation.

Checking with the hospital authorities, I was told that the majority of cases brought for hospitalization were heart cases, and untold lives were saved on account of the prompt action and careful handling of the aid-men.

I feel that this was a job well done.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LACKAWANNA HEART ASSOCIATION

The Lackawanna Heart Association was organized in Lackawanna County in 1949. The first president was Dr. John E. Manley, followed by:

Adrian V. Casey, M.D.
Clyde Mattas, M.D.
Frederick Davies, M.D.
Milton M. Goldstein, M.D.
Albert Cross, M.D.
Aaron S. Cantor, M.D.
Louis Murphy, M.D.
Thomas McDonnell, M.D.

My good friend, the late Dr. Aaron S. Cantor, on becoming president of the Association in June, 1951, asked me to be Chairman of the Heart Fund in February, 1952. Before undertaking this commission I conferred with Dr. Cantor regarding the services of the Heart Association, He informed me that all funds previously collected were allocated to the national research projects, and a portion was used locally on an educational program consisting of films, literature and exhibits for both public and professional groups. I inquired about establishing a cardiac clinic and Dr. Cantor and members of the medical advisory committee agreed there was a need for it. In fact, one of the proposals

I put before Dr. Cantor was that I would be very much interested in raising the necessary amount to establish a cardiac clinic; I felt that the people of Lackawanna County would support a clinic of this kind in which persons with limited means would be able to get a free heart examination consisting of electro-cardiagrams, blood pressure and other tests. With this objective, I began the fund-raising plans. This was a rather different campaign from any fund-raising experience I had in the past. The organization was comparatively young; an office had just been opened and an executive secretary appointed in June, 1951. The people of the County were not entirely aware of the objectives of either the American Heart Association or its chapter here in Lackawanna County. Yet, notwithstanding these obstacles, our campaign totaled $29,000, an increase of $16,000 over the figure of the previous year. The National Heart Research organization was making remarkable progress in combating heart disease and was being maintained by local chapters; 40% of all money raised by the chapters went for research.

In October 1952, we dedicated the Cardiac Evaluation Center in the Hahnemann Hospital, equipped with the finest instruments, at an approximate investment of $3,097.

As of January 1958, the number of patients examined was 646, and the number of follow-up examinations was 278.

Work in the clinic, while we do not have a graduate technician, is being done by Mrs. Angela Jordan, who was trained by Dr. Cantor and other physicians, and today the medical men interested in the clinic think that she has developed into an expert in making the preliminary examinations.

On account of our affiliation with national heart research, we were able to have a certain number of patients referred by the medical men connected with our clinic to Philadelphia for surgery or observation at no cost to our chapter.

One of the recent strides forward in the prevention of recurrent heart disease and extension of the life span for cardiac patients has been the use of special types of penicil-

lin. It has only been since 1951 that research specifically pointing towards the developments of a long-acting penicillin was able to afford the cardiac patient new hope. This long-acting penicillin can now be taken at daily or weekly intervals and maintains adequate levels in the blood stream to prevent recurrent infections upon the defective valve leaflets.

With the advent of this type of therapy, it is anticipated that the life expectancy of many cardiacs will be doubled and certainly go a long way toward preventing premature deaths in a large portion of the cardiac-crippled population.

On the strength of this, our clinic has, on the recommendations of local physicians, furnished penicillin to 425 children.

Our clinic has done a great service to the community of Lackawanna County. The amount raised in the County to support and maintain our clinic since 1952 is $209,301.60. Forty per cent of this helped support national and state research programs; the remainder was used for the medically needy of our area—in clinic examinations, surgical correction in Philadelphia, and treatment of children with rheumatic fever.

The widely-recognized success of the Lackawanna Heart Association is to the credit of those doctors interested in cardiac problems; Mrs. Angela Jordan, executive secretary; Robert Gownley; Rose Silverman; and the hundreds of men and women who collect money on Heart Sunday.

CHAPTER XXIII

SCRANTON LIBRARY BOOKMOBILE

In 1956 I was requested by Dr. Bernard Shair, then president of the Friends of the Scranton Library, to help raise money to establish a bookmobile whereby good reading material could be delivered to schools and distributed among the students, as well as to isolated districts where it is hard for the people to reach a library.

I called persons interested in providing books, particularly to isolated districts, and the following members of our community signified their willingness to act on a committee:

Robert V. Horger, President of the Scranton National Bank
Rev. Dr. P. K. Emmons, Minister of Westminster Presbyterian Church
Lawrence W. Tice, President of the I.C.S.
A. Alexander Bernstein, M.D.
Rev. Dr. B. DuVal, Minister of Elm Park Church
Honorable Judge Michael J. Eagen
Henry W. Gann, President, Gann Advertising Agency
Mrs. Willard Henkelman, Secretary of the Lackawanna United Fund
Rabbi Erwin L. Herman
George Joel, Executive Secretary of the Jewish Community Center
Clyde L. Mattes, M.D.
Rabbi Simon Shoop, Temple Israel
Frank Stemple, Executive Vice-President of the First National Bank
Milton Aronsohn, Vice-President, Samuel Aronsohn, Inc.
Stanley Boland, M.D.
Anna C. Clarke, M.D.

Benjamin Cottone, M.D.
Albert J. Cross, M.D.
Harry Dickstein
Charles Dispensa
Monsignor William K. Dolan
Dorothy Dyer
Margaret Dyer
David Fiegleman
Herman S. Goodman
Irving Harris
Frank Hemelright
John O'Leary
Thomas Phillips
Rev. John J. Long, S.J.
Edward Lynett
John B. McDade
Richard F. McNichols
Henry Nogi
John J. O'Connell
Mrs. Martin T. O'Malley
Ted V. Rodgers, Sr.

The following officers were elected:

General Chairman—A. B. Cohen
Co-Chairman —Gordon Evans
Vice-Chairman —Bernard Shair, D.D.S.
Treasurer —H. M. Brandamore
Secretary —Joseph H. Myers

To raise money for a bookmobile was the hardest fund-raising job I ever undertook; it appeared that people in general did not realize the importance of providing facilities to isolated districts to deliver books and good reading material.

The trustees of the Scranton Public Library consented to provide a space in the Albright Public Iibrary for a bronze tablet upon which the names of contributors of $50 or more would be inscribed in bronze letters.

I communicated with the Internal Revenue, and we were informed that any donation to the bookmobile was a deductible item from taxes.

After addressing hundreds of letters to members of our community we were able to raise enough money to purchase

a bookmobile which cost approximately $13,000 and it has already been delivered and is a very fine machine with facilities for about 3,000 volumes. The bookmobile was put in operation in February of 1958.

The success of the drive was due to the cooperation of all the members of the Board of Directors and to the energetic cooperation of Thomas F. Murphy, Dr. Benjamin DuVal, Dr. Bernard Shair, Mrs. Mortimer Fruehan, then president of the Parent-Teachers' Association; to the work of Joseph Myers, librarian of the Scranton Public Library, and also to the work of the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

I have written of the life of our Jewish community as I have lived it for the past sixty-three years. I have not attempted to include everything (partly because I do not want to hurt anybody) but everything you have just read is true and highlights the growth and development of Scranton Jewry and of myself as one of its members.

The events themselves are now ancient history. Thank the Lord our community today is probably one of the finest in the nation. We live all together in harmony and peace and there is no such thing as a second or third class Jew.

I want to conclude my narrative with the following thought: groups of people can develop in two major ways—as if they were in a flower pot or a melting pot. A melting pot is one into which several ingredients are boiled down until they blend indistinguishably together and lose all individuality; the result may be a good one, but it will not resemble any one—and certainly not all—of its component parts. A flower pot is one into which different varieties of flowers are planted—each requiring special conditions for proper individual growth. For best results, the flower pot needs a trained florist to bring out the individual characteristics of each bloom. The result will be many-hued and variegated; the one pot will hold the easily-distinguishable blossoms of many seeds.

Our community is like the flower pot and we are thankful to our leaders, whether Orothodox, Conservative or Re-

form. We are living in harmony largely due to their influence: instead of a melting pot we have fashioned a flower pot in which each of us can bloom in our own special way.

I am reminded that after one of Hitler's attacks on the Old Testament and the Jews, the late Cardinal Falhauber came to their defense. He praised the Old Testament and the Jews very highly, then concluded as follows: "I am writing this article pertaining to the period B.C. After that, I do not consider the Jews deserving of this praise."

As applied to the history of Scranton Jewry, I would reverse this last statement. I am writing these memoirs pertaining to the period before the present one. Now there isn't a group of Jews anywhere whose general well-being can exceed that of our community in Scranton.

I am pleased and proud to have been a part of all this.

A GLOSSARY OF HEBREW, JEWISH, OR FOREIGN WORDS

Bedder: Man in charge of bathhouse.

Beth Hamedrash: A house of learning and prayer.

B'rith: Religious ceremony, Circumcision.

Chalah: Special bread for Saturdays and holidays.

Chassid: A pious individual.

Cheder: A Hebrew school.

Chlen: Head officer of statistical bureau.

Dayon: Assistant to the Rabbi.

Gabbai: Elder of the Synagogue.

Galuth: Foreign land or lands.

Geder: A high fence or enclosure.

Gemorrah: A part of the Talmud.

Geschichte: A story—usually a very imaginative one.

Kalta Flaisch: Cold meat.

Kiddush: Special prayer on Sabbath or holidays.

Kol Nidre: Prayer for Yom Kippur Eve.

Kotainte: Unworthy, small, insignificant.

Lamener: A whitewasher.

Ligner: A liar.

Maftir: An addition to the portion of the Bible read on Saturdays or holidays.

Mikva: A body of water used for ritualistic bathing purposes.

Minyon: A religious quorum consisting of ten men. Colloquially the place where they meet to pray. Plural, *"Minyonem."*

Mischeberach: A prayer for someone.

Mitzvah: A divinely ordained commandment.

Mohel: One who performs circumcisions.

Neilah: Final Service of Yom Kippur.

Pidyon Haben: First born son belongs to the high priest, and the parents redeem him for 5 scalim (Hebrew term for the amount of redemption) in an ancient, historical ceremony.

Pristow: Head police official.

Shimina Atzeras: A Holy Day.

Schochet: A man who slaughters in accordance with the laws on Kosher observance.

Shamas: A Sexton of a Synagogue.

Shule: A Synagogue.

Talis Kotan: A small prayer shawl.

Talmud Chochem: Authority on Hebrew Literature.

Tzadik: Righteous man.

Tzimas: A cooked dish, usually of carrots and sweet potatoes.

Tzitzis: Fringes used on a prayer shawl.

Yoshen: The grain from last year.

Zohar: A work on Mysticism.

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3—
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To Rabbi Friedman
with my compliments
sincerely
H. A. Friedman

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