the essex story

A history of
the Jewish Community
in Essex County,
New Jersey

Jewish Education Association of Essex County
An agency of the
Jewish Community Council of Essex County

Newark, New Jersey

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May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants, while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.

G. Washington

(From a letter to the Hebrew Congregation in New Port, Rhode Island, 1790)

It is with good reason and much pride that the Jewish community in the United States is celebrating a nationwide observance, commemorating the 300th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in America. This historic event took place ten years before our own State was first colonized at Elizabeth in 1664.

People of many lands and of all religions, acknowledging the omnipotence of Almighty God, have contributed to the greatness of our Country and are responsible for its spiritual strength and well-being. None of these groups has a finer record of devotion to the ideals and principles upon which the United States is founded, or has given more in courage, fortitude and sacrifice, than those of your faith.

As Chief Executive of our State, I extend my warmest good wishes on this memorable occasion of your Tercentenary.

Robert B. Meyner
Governor

(From a letter to all Jewish Congregations in New Jersey, 1954)

Why a story of the Jewish community of Essex County?

The annals of Jewish history contain the records of Jewish communities by the hundreds, if not by the thousands. Some of them existed two thousand years ago or earlier; others are as recent as our own, or still younger. Some, like Kai-feng Fu in China, Pumbeditha in Babylonia, Lublin in Poland, or Johannesburg in South Africa, are located in faraway places; others, like Charleston, S.C., Rochester, N.Y., or Mexico City, lie much closer.

Their stories tell, in effect, a similar tale. For wherever Jews found themselves, they strove to maintain their own way of life. And this they accomplished despite all hardships, continuing to observe the same laws and customs, to offer the same prayers, and to dream the same dreams of justice and freedom.

And yet, our story is different in many respects. To us, moreover, this community, founded by our great-grandparents, grandparents and parents, is of very special interest. The scene of their labors is familiar to us. The historic landmarks, many of them, are still here for us to see. And the fruit of their labors is ours to enjoy.

It was not easy to write this story. The early settlers did not keep diaries, nor do we have newspaper accounts of their activities. Many of the original documents and records have been lost. Court records, congregational minutes and simular sources yielded bits of information. Much useful material was found in THE JEWISH COMMUNITY BLUE BOOK OF NEWARK, published in 1926 and edited by Anton Kaufman. Nathan Kussy's essay, "Early History of the Jews in Newark", printed in that volume, was particularly helpful, as was his article in the UNIVERSAL JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA. Likewise, the fifteenth anniversary issue of "The Jewish Chronicle", in 1936, was a mine of information. Mr. Herman M. Pekarsky, executive director of the Jewish Community Council, also placed valuable resource material at our disposal.

Not a little of the story was furnished by "old timers" or their descendants, who reminisced for our benefit. Yellowed pictures and old musty documents were brought down from attics. As a result, many of the facts given in this book have never appeared in print before. To all these individuals, too numerous to mention by name, go our sincere thanks.

Mention should be made, however, of Mr. George J. Miller, of South Orange, whose avocation is Jewish history, and who graciously supplied us with some interesting data, the fruit of years of original research. Mr. David Bucharest, of Weequahic High School, compiled some useful material.

The scope of our story is not limited to the borders of Essex County, but includes a few adjacent communities which are affiliated with the Jewish Community Council of Essex County. It should also be stated that we have deemed it advisable to omit all references to professional community workers - rabbis, educators, social workers - still functioning at present.

This volume has been written as a text to be used in junior and senior high school departments of our religious schools. A teacher's guide is now in preparation. Yet, though designed primarily for young people, it is our fond hope that the volume may prove of equal interest to adult readers.

No attempt has been made to provide footnotes, appendices and similar features commonly found in a work of scholarship. A comprehensive documented history of this community is yet to be written.

THE ESSEX STORY is the product of the teamwork of the members of the professional staff of the Jewish Education Association. It is our modest contribution to the observance of the Tercentenary of Jewish life in America.

Gershon Gelbart
Sylvan H. Kohn
David Rudavsky

Newark, N. J.
Tevet 5715 - January 1955

Chapter One

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

During the year 5715 of our Jewish calendar, which corresponds to the civil year 1954-55, the Jewish community in the U. S. is celebrating a birthday. It is exactly 300 years since the first group of Jews settled in this country. A three hundredth anniversary is called a Tercentenary, and is, indeed, an occasion for rejoicing.

The Pilgrim Fathers had landed at Plymouth Rock only 34 years before the arrival of the Jewish settlers at New Amsterdam in 1654. The Dutch Colony on Manhattan Island, which later became New York City, was itself no more than thirty-odd years old at the time.

It is well to remember that the handful of 23 Jews who disembarked from the St. Charles on that fateful September day three hundred years ago were not the first Jews to set foot on American soil. Jews were not only among those who helped Columbus with the scientific preparations for his voyage and who helped finance it, but they were also among his shipmates. Indeed, some historians believe that the great explorer himself was of Jewish origin. Certain it is that his interpreter, Luis de Torres, was a Marrano — that is, one of those thousands of Spanish Jews forced to live as Christians. It was he who is said to have given the turkey its name, calling it "tuki" (תוכי); the Hebrew word for "peacock" or "parrot".

While the Jewish pioneers who settled in New Amsterdam were but a handful, and their influence could not have been very great at first, Hebraic culture had come to the New World ahead of them, and was destined to play a most important part in the shaping of the American way of life. The Pilgrim Fathers were imbued with the spirit of the Bible, and in their flight from persecution in their native England they thought of themselves as the Israelites of old, fleeing from Egypt across the Red Sea to the Promised Land of Canaan. Once established in their new land, they decided to govern themselves in accordance with the Law of Moses. Their leaders learned Hebrew so as to read the Bible in the original, and Hebrew became a required subject of study at Harvard College which was founded a few years later. In that same spirit, they called their towns and villages by biblical names, such as Salem, Bethel and Hebron.

The passengers of the St. Charles came to New Amster-

dam from another Dutch colony in South America, called Recife, now Pernambuco, a city in Brazil. That had been the first Jewish community in the New World. For some 25 years the Jews lived there in peace, under Dutch rule. But when the colony was recaptured by the Portuguese, the Jews had to flee for their lives. For the Porguguese, like the Spaniards of that time, did not permit Jews to live in their lands, unless they became Christians. And the Jews of Recife, like Jews throughout the ages, preferred to wander and to suffer rather than give up their religion.

It was a long, long journey that was reaching a peaceful haven at the shores of Manhattan Island. The trek had begun some 1600 years earlier when the Roman oppressor drove out their ancestors from the land of their fathers. Taking up a wanderer's staff, the Jews started their search for a place where they might be permitted to live in accordance with the teachings of the Torah and bring up their children in the faith of their fathers. They settled, in turn, in Babylon and in Spain, in North Africa and in Italy, in France, England and Germany, in Poland and in Russia and, indeed, in practically every land on the face of the globe. In some places they found freedom and they prospered, but sooner or later their stay there would come to an end when they were forbidden to live as Jews. So great was the Jews' love of freedom and so deeply did they cherish their heritage that most of them never hesitated when faced with the choice of giving up their religion or going into exile all over again.

And so it happened that the year 1654, which marked the disappearance of the first Jewish community in South America, witnessed the birth of the first Jewish community in what is now the United States. This first group of Jews, poor and unprotected, was not welcomed with open arms by Governor Stuyvesant or the Dutch inhabitants. Only through the intervention of influential Jews in Holland were they granted the right to settle in the colony. Like other residents who were not members of the Dutch Church, they had to fight to secure the rights that the law denied them. Although it was not easy, this small band of Jews founded a congregation that first year and won the right of citizenship and free worship. Not permitted to build a synagogue, they held services in private homes. The congregation they established, known as "Shearith Israel" (שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל), meaning "The Remnant of Israel", still exists today.

This was the beginning of what is now the largest Jewish community not only in America, but in the entire world — not excluding even the State of Israel — actually, the largest

in the long history of the Jewish People.

Growth of the Jewish community in America

For the first two centuries after their settlement in New Amsterdam, the Jewish community in America increased very slowly. By the time of the American Revolution in 1776, of a total population of three million, only some two thousand were Jews.

These early settlers were largely "Sephardic" Jews. They were the descendants of those Jews who had lived in Spain and Portugal for over one thousand years but were forced, in the year 1492, either to accept Christianity or leave the country.

This first stage of immigration was followed by others, in which "Ashkenazic" Jews were in the majority. The Ashkenazic, or German group, includes Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, whose ancestors originally came from Germany.

By 1881 there ware 250,000 Jews in the country. Most of them had come from Germany and Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia), and their native tongue was German. While the earlier immigrants, the Sephardic Jews, sought refuge on these shores from religious persecution, the German Jews were fleeing from political oppression and grinding poverty. This period, particularly the decade between 1840 and 1850, was one of turmoil throughout Central Europe. Inspired by the example of the American and French Revolutions, the people demanded a greater share in the government of their countries. These demands, which sometimes took the form of revolts and uprisings, were cruelly suppressed by the rulers. Life, particularly for the Jews, became increasingly difficult, and these intolerable conditions brought many of them to America in another wave of immigration.

The third and largest wave of immigration came between 1881 and 1925. The new arrivals were, in the main, Yiddish speaking Jews from Russia, Poland, Galicia, Romania and Hungary. The Russian Jews fled from their country in the wake of the bloody pogroms instigated by the Czar's government. Oppressive laws combined with the constant threat of massacre to drive the Jews of Eastern Europe from their homes in tremendous numbers. When this wave of immigration was stopped by law in 1924, the Jewish population in the U.S. had grown to nearly 4 1/2 million. This is why most American Jews today are either themselves of East European birth, or are descendants of East European immigrants.

In 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany and soon proceeded to carry out a cruel program of persecution against the Jews, which led to the deliberate murder of six million Jews in the years of the Second World War. The Jews of Germany and of the countries overrun by Hitler sought to escape, and several hundred thousand refugees managed to come to these shores. As was the case with the earlier immigrants, these refugees were received with warmhearted hospitality by their brethren who had the good fortune to precede them in this land of liberty and opportunity.

At the end of 300 years, the Jewish community in America numbers some five million people in a total population of 160 million. Thus, three percent of all Americans are Jews. Like other Americans — "immigrants all" — they or their ancestors have come from all parts of the world to build here a life of dignity, in the best traditions of their group. In the course of these centuries, American Jewry has built up hundreds of Jewish communities throughout the land. These communities, giving expression to the ideals of Judaism, have founded and maintained religious and cultural institutions — synagogues, schools, community centers and educational organizations. They established welfare institutions, hospitals, homes for the aged and for the orphan, sanatoriums, and social service agencies of various kinds. Besides, they contributed generously to the aid of their fellow Jews overseas and to the upbuilding of Israel as the Jewish homeland.

American Jews never overlooked their obligations as American citizens. They rallied to the defense of their country in time of war, and participated in its development in time of peace. Jews contributed to every phase of American life — civic, cultural and economic.

Chapter Two

THE JEWS COME TO ESSEX COUNTY

Our story deals with one part of the State of New Jersey — Essex County — which includes the city of Newark and vicinity. This area today is home to some 90,000 Jews, about half of whom reside in Newark. It is the sixth or seventh largest Jewish community in the entire country.

How did this community get started? Who and what manner of people were those first settlers? When did they come, and what brought them here? How did they fare? Who were their leaders? How did they build the Jewish community we have today?

The Jews come to New Jersey

A curious fact is to be noted at the very outset. In the 17th century the State was divided into East and West Jersey and was owned by private individuals. Among the proprietors of West Jersey was Benjamin Levy, a Jew of London, England. In 1702 when the two Jerseys were united into the crown colony of New Jersey, Levy, who never set foot in America, was among those who signed a petition in connection with the appointment of the first royal governor.

Though there was no settled Jewish community in New Jersey until a little more than a century ago, individual Jews are known to have traveled through this area from the earliest colonial times and occasionally to have settled here. It was not uncommon for Jews residing in Philadelphia and New York to travel through the State, on the way between the two settlements, and sell to New Jersey farmers the goods they needed. As early as 1655, two recent Jewish arrivals in New Amsterdam, Isaac Israel and Benjamin Cardozo, received permission to trade with the Indians at the South, now the Delaware, River. Later on we hear of other Jewish peddlers doing business throughout the State, bearing the Sephardic names of de Lucena, Gomez, Medina and others.

When a peddler saved up enough money, he opened a general store which provided the kind of goods the community needed. The peddler, now a storekeeper, lived alongside or behind his shop. One such merchant, Daniel Nunez, achieved quite a reputation in his store in Piscataway Township, in Middlesex County. In 1722 he was a justice of the County Quarter Sessions Court and served also as the town clerk,

treasurer and tax collector of the township. He was perhaps the first Jew to hold office in America.

The brothers Aaron and Moses Louzada settled in Bound Brook in Somerset County where they owned large tracts of land, a general store, and operated a grist mill. They contributed liberally to the congregation "Shearith Israel" in New York, to which they belonged. They also made donations to help their Christian neighbors build a Lutheran church. They were proud Jews who insisted, when the occasion required, on taking an oath on the Five Books of Moses and not on the Christian Scriptures, as was the custom then. Moses died in 1740.

Asher Levy, or Lewis, served as an ensign in the First Regiment of the New Jersey troops that fought in the Revolution. He was the grandson of the famous Asser Levy of New Amsterdam, who did so much to secure equal treatment for the Jews in the Dutch colony.

We know of at least one New Jersey Jewish soldier who fought in the War of 1812. Isaac De Young, of the New Jersey Artillery, was wounded at the battle of Lundy's Lane.

A prominent and influential Jewish citizen of the 1830s and later decades was David Naar, who owned a farm at Wheatsheaf, near Elizabeth, then a part of Essex County. He held many public offices, among them that of Mayor of Elizabeth and presiding judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Essex County. He helped in improving the public school system, particularly in the establishment of the State Teachers College. In 1845 President Polk appointed him U.S. Consul at St. Thomas, in the West Indies. Later he moved to Trenton, where he published a newspaper called "The True American". Naar had fifteen children.

Religious Freedom

New Jersey, unlike some of the other colonies, was known for religious tolerance from its earliest days. The first governmental regulations, issued in 1665, permitted each inhabitant to "have and enjoy his and their judgments of conscience in matters of religion." Full freedom of worship was granted to all in the constitution adopted by the Provincial Assembly in 1776, but only Protestants were given the right to hold office. Jews thus enjoyed religious freedom without possessing equal political rights. Nearly seventy more years were to pass before this inequality was abolished, and this came as a result of the protests of Catholics and other minority groups. In 1844 a state convention drafted a

new constitution which abolished any religious test as a qualification for voting or holding office. Among the convention delegates from Essex County was David Naar, who served on the Bill of Rights Committee.

It is possible that the adoption of the liberal constitution of 1844 served to attract Jews to settle in the State. For it was in the years immediately following that the first Jewish communities sprang up in Newark, Paterson, Trenton and New Brunswick.

Jewish farmers

Before continuing with our story of Essex County, we will do well to consider briefly an interesting chapter in the Jewish history of New Jersey.

In the two thousand years since the Jews were exiled from Palestine, few Jews could engage in agriculture. In most European countries they were not permitted to own farms, and for centuries they were detached from the soil.

In the early decades of the last century, with the increase in Jewish immigration, it occurred to some Jewish leaders in America that it might be well if some of their people settled on the land instead of crowding in the cities. Attempts were made to shift poor Jewish families from the cities to farm villages. Rural settlements were established in New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, the Dakotas, Kansas and other states. Most of these settlements failed and were abandoned, because Jews lacked both experience and guidance in farming. Those in New Jersey fared better.

The organization of French Jews, known as "Alliance Israelite Universelle", founded a settlement in Salem County in 1882 which, quite fittingly, was called Alliance. Carmel, in Cumberland County, was founded in the same year, Woodbine in Cape May County, in 1891. There were others. The great European Jewish philanthropist, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, aided these agricultural settlements financially. Originally, these were largely truck farms. Later, poultry raising was introduced, and this has now become the principal occupation of the Jewish farm settlements in southern New Jersey. These colonies were the beginning of the Jewish farm movement which has attracted some 100,000 people into agriculture.

Baron de Hirsch, also helped to establish the first Jewish farm school in Woodbine in 1894, which was America's first high school for agriculture. From this school came teachers, scientists, soil chemists who pioneered in many

fields. One of its first graduates was Professor Jacob G. Lipman who, in 1902, was called to Rutgers University to organize the first department of soil chemistry and bacteriology in the country. Later he became the first dean of the New Jersey State Agricultural Experiment Station. One of Lipman's students was Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Selman A. Waksman, discoverer of streptomycin.

A community is born

In 1666, Robert Treat came with a band of Puritan settlers from Connecticut and purchased from the Indians a large area, roughly coinciding with what is now Essex County. The settlement on the banks of the Passaic River was named "Newark Town" and consisted of 30 families. They agreed to set up a government under the specific authority of the following biblical texts: Exodus 18:21, Deuteronomy 1:13, 17:15, and Jeremiah 30:21.

At the time of the founding of Newark, a Jewish community already was flourishing in nearby New York. But just when Jews first reached Newark is not known, for official records of the Colonial and Revolutionary periods have been lost. Undoubtedly, there were a few isolated Jews in Newark and in the surrounding area, as in other parts of the State. The Jews of this region went to New York to attend religious services on holy days, and while there, purchased the goods they needed.

Newark, today the largest city in the State, with a population of 440,000, was, of course, much smaller 100 years ago. The people lived in what is now the downtown section; the outlying area consisted of farms and pasture lands. The streets were narrow, unpaved. There was no plumbing, and water was drawn in pails from wells. The population of Newark — which had become a city in 1836 — totaled 38,000, and there were but fifteen cities in the U.S. with more inhabitants. Like most cities of its size throughout the country, it was then an unattractive and drab little town — not the large, modern metropolis of today.

Louis Trier came to Newark in 1844 and founded a small tannery on what is now New Jersey Railroad Avenue at Green Street. He was the first known Jewish settler. There is reason to believe that his son Abraham, born in 1845, was the first Jewish child born in Newark.

Other families followed the Triers, some coming to Newark directly from Europe, others moving here from New York.

Who were these settlers?

The Jews who settled in Newark in the middle of the last century came mainly from Germany and Bohemia. It took a great deal of courage and determination to make the long and dangerous voyage in the small, frail, filthy sailing vessels of those days. It took 126 days for one of these immigrants, Bernard Hauser, to reach the shores of America in 1844, a trip which a modern ocean liner now completes in five or six days. Thirteen years later, when Gustav Kussy made the journey from Austria, he lived for sixty days in the steerage of just such a sailboat. But in spite of the dinginess of the living quarters of these sailboats, the Jewish passengers kept their religious observances and ate only kosher food.

The immigrants were extremely poor, as may be judged from the sort of wedding gifts that were given in those days. They included such items as a washline, a broken iron stove with a leg missing, and a washtub. Gustav Kussy had only two dollars left after paying for his wedding expenses. Thus did this pioneer, the founder of one of the community's prominent families, start his married life in Newark. But these young couples had great courage, willingness to work long hours, boundless energy, and infinite hope and faith in God, in America and in themselves.

What did they do for a living?

Most of the early Newark Jews started their business careers as peddlers. In the wee hours of the morning they heaved their heavy packs upon their backs and trudged for many weary miles along its streets and out into the country, knocking on the doors of isolated farmhouses and trying to sell to the farmwives a few stockings, spools of cotton thread, needles or cheap household crockery. Working long hours and saving every penny that could be spared from the bare necessities of existence, many of these men accumulated enough money to bring their kin to this country, purchase a horse and wagon, or set up a small shop.

Several years after his arrival in Newark, Louis Trier, by now the father of six children, moved his tannery to Market Street, between Washington and Plane Streets. There were tanneries all along the south side of Market Street. To this very day, manufacturing and leather tanning are among the industries for which Newark is famous.

Another Jewish immigrant, Isaac Newman, who arrived

in 1845, opened a boarding house on River Street. Later he moved to the vicinity of Springfield Avenue and Prince Streets, where a large part of the city's Jewish population then lived. In the course of time, Isaac went into the wholesale butcher business.

Isaac's brother, Abraham, was still a peddler selling notions to the farmers and dreaming of the time he could open his own drygoods store. Subsequently, he owned a drygoods establishment on Market near Washington Street.

About 1848, Bernard Hauser moved to Newark from New York. He first sold cigars, then opened a grocery store at the southwest corner of Springfield Avenue and Prince Street. Finally he was able to purchase the property, and became owner of the building which he operated as a boarding house. Here, in 1853, his son Daniel was born. In later years Daniel recalled that as a little boy he had been lifted up to a window of a train at the Pennsylvania Station in Newark in order to shake hands with President Lincoln who was passing through the town.

At one time or another, Hauser's boarding house, like other similar establishments, was home to many of the early families of Newark. A boarding house served not only as a dwelling, but also as a social center. Here the weary peddlers relaxed after a long day's work. Here they discussed the events of the day, politics, business and local gossip. Here the marriage brokers, "shadhanim" (שַׁדְכָנִים), lauded the virtues of young men and women whom they wished to bring together in marriage.

By 1855, there were some 200 Jewish families in Newark. These humble peddlers began to shed their poverty and to become merchants. Butcher shops, grocery stores, tanneries, cigar and trunk factories, on Broad Street, Springfield Avenue, Market Street and other sections of the city, now bore Jewish names.

The City Directory of 1853-54 listed a Hester Goldstein, a dressmaker, the first Jewish woman — and perhaps the first Newark woman — to go into business. It also contained the name of Jacob Lagowitz, who later became the largest manufacturer of trunks in the East. He was Newark's first Jew to attain considerable wealth.

Before 1860, the leading drygoods stores in Newark were owned by Jews. Hart & Dettlebach opened a store at the corner of East Park and Broad Streets. Ullman & Isaacs were located on Broad Street near New Street. Klein & Thalheimer were on Market Street near Halsey. Mayer Froelich's establishment was located on Broad Street near William Street.

In the employ of Ullman & Isaacs was a young clerk named Benjamin Altman, who dreamed of saving enough money to open his own store in New York. The dream came true. Benjamin became the founder of B. Altman & Company in New York, one of the biggest department stores in the country.

Leopold S. Plaut, with his partner Leopold Fox, founded the L.S. Plaut & Co. in 1871. The store grew and in time became "The Bee Hive", famed a generation or two ago throughout the country. More recently it was purchased by Kresge• Newark Department Store.

Among Newark's earliest Jewish financiers and bankers was Nathaniel King, whose firm of Eisele & King became one of the State's leading brokerage houses.

Jews were not lagging in manufacture, either. Abraham Rothschild built one of the great leather factories in the United States. R. G. Solomon was also a leading manufacturer of leather. There were, of course, others who established industries in Newark as well as in other parts of the county.

As early as 1813, a copper rolling mill in Bloomfield was acquired by Solomon I. Isaacs and Harmon Hendricks, the latter a member of an old New York Jewish family. The firm owned considerable property extending into Belleville. Bloomfield has an Isaacs Street and a Hendricks Place, named after these two industrial pioneers.

Chapter Three

WE BUILD OUR SYNAGOGUES

The Jews who settled in Newark a hundred years ago did not undergo the hardships of travel and adjusting to a new country merely to improve their economic and political condition. Like others of their brethren who immigrated to America and like Jews throughout history, they sought freedom so that they might build in the New World a Jewish life for themselves and for their children.

Today there are some fifty congregations and synagogues in the county, enough to accommodate every Jewish family living in this area. It may, therefore, be a bit difficult to imagine a time where there was not a single congregation and when the few scattered Jews living in Newark were obliged to go to New York to attend religious services.

Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

When Isaac S. Cohen came from England to Newark in 1847, he found here a handful of Jews. They had little in common except their poverty and their religion. They had no organized activities. It was largely Cohen's wise leadership that helped bring these people closer together and form a community.

To his house at 338 Washington Street he invited the men of his acquaintance, mainly immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine and Western Germany, for a "minyan" (מִנְיָן). Among those who came were Louis Trier, Wolf Bergstrasser, Isaac, Abraham and Solomon Newman, Bernard Hauser, David Marx, and Meyer Neuberger, some of whose descendants are still active in the community. At Cohen's home they conducted religious services every Sabbath for some time.

On August 20, 1848, at a meeting held at Cohen's home, they decided to organize themselves into a congregation. Earlier, the group had purchased a burial ground on Belmont, near 18th Avenue. About six weeks later, on October 6th, the certificate of incorporation of the "Jewish Religious Congregation B'nai Jeshurun" (בְּנֵי יְשֻׁרוּן, Sons of Jeshurun) was filed. The trustees included Cohen, Louis Trier, Abraham Eichtershaimer, Abraham and Isaac Newman. Cohen was elected president or "Parnass" (פַּרְנָס).

The congregation soon required more spacious quarters



ISAAC S. COHEN



ABRAHAM NEWMAN

and moved from Cohen's house to an attic they rented in a brick building on Catherine (now Arlington) Street, about half a block south of Market. Twice a day the worshipers had to climb long flights of stairs to the new synagogue - early in the morning, at six, before the working hours began, and again in the evening, when the day's work was over. They sat on crude benches during their prayers.

A quarrel between Cohen and another member of the congregation broke out, and Cohen angrily left Newark for New York. He took with him the "Sefer Torah" (סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, scroll of the Law) which he had lent the congregation. Trier and Newman visited him in New York and begged him to return to Newark and give the scroll back to the congregation. Cohen returned the scroll, but set down a condition that B'nai Jeshurun should never change its name, since it was the first congregation formed in the State of New Jersey.

At first, services were conducted by the more learned laymen. But in 1854, when the congregation numbered 22 members paying weekly dues of 12 1/2 cents, a rabbi was engaged to officiate at services and teach the children. Isaac Schwarz, a descendant of a well-known rabbinical family in Floss, Bavaria, had come to Newark the previous year, from Columbus, Georgia. He served B'nai Jeshurun until 1860. His yearly salary for the first three years was 300 dollars. Even with butter selling at ten cents a pound and eggs at eight cents a dozen, this salary was rather less than adequate. It took, however, three years for his salary to be increased to 400 dollars a year! Rabbi Schwarz also functioned as the "shohet" (שׁוֹחֵט) or ritual slaughterer.

There was no other rabbi in Newark at the time, and when Rabbi Schwarz took a bride in 1854, the couple was obliged to go to New York for their wedding. Among their grandchildren are several of our leaders today.

All along, the congregation worshiped in rented quarters, moving from one building to another. In 1858, it erected its first permanent home at the corner of Washington Street and Maiden Lane, at a cost of $5,500. In addition to schoolrooms, the synagogue building contained a "mikva" (מִקְוֶה) or ritual bath. It was a very hard struggle to raise the money for the new structure. The united efforts of the membership, now grown to 60, resulted in raising a sum of only $1,800, which was used to purchase a lot. An appeal for funds, addressed to "sister congregations of New York and abroad", was not made in vain.

Before long, however, even the new building proved inadequate, and in 1867 the cornerstone was laid for a new

temple at Washington and William Streets. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, founder of the Hebrew Union College, was the speaker at the exercises. The synagogue served until 1915, when the present splendid structure on High Street and Waverly Avenue was erected, largely through the efforts of Joseph Goetz and Philip Lindeman.

Reform Judaism came gradually to B'nai Jeshurun which had started as an Orthodox congregation. Beginning with 1860, a number of innovations were introduced into the service. In 1864, a petition was presented to "modernize" the worship and to adopt the "Minhag Amerika", a prayerbook prepared by Rabbi Wise in 1849. This prayerbook contained many changes from the traditional services. The petition was defeated by a majority of the congregation, but the Reform faction continued to press its demands. In 1882, the congregation approved the removal of hats in the synagogue, and in 1896, the Reform "Union Prayer Book" was officially adopted.

Two rabbis ministered to this congregation for nearly 75 years. Rabbi Jacob Leucht, who served from 1868 to 1905, began preaching in English in 1882. Rabbi Solomon Foster came in 1902, first as associate rabbi, and served until 1941, when he became rabbi emeritus. In 1926 he founded the "New Jersey Normal School for Jewish Teachers", which trained Sunday School instructors for the Reform congregations.

Congregation B'nai Abraham

By the middle of the nineteenth century, a large number of Polish Jewish immigrants settled in the Newark area. Most of them were poor struggling peddlers who found homes largely in Canal and Mulberry Streets. There was a language barrier between the Yiddish speaking Polish Jews and the German speaking Jews of B'nai Jeshurun. Moreover, they were accustomed to their own synagogue ritual, and the services at B'nai Jeshurun appeared strange to them.

One of the founders of B'nai Jeshurun, Abraham Newman, understood the plight of the Polish Jews and recognized their need for a separate congregation. In 1853 he invited a group of them to conduct services at his home on Bank Street and presented them with a "Sefer Torah". They organized a congregation which they called B'nai Abraham (בְּנֵי אַבְרָהָם) Sons of Abraham) in honor of their benefactor. Because the new congregation consisted of Polish Jews, people frequently referred to it as the Polish "Kahal" (קָהָל), just as B'nai Jeshurun

became known as the German congregation.

On October 14, 1855, the congregation met in their new quarters at 107 Market Street, and decided to incorporate. The trustees were Lesser Marks, Isaac Solomon, Abraham Winters, Israel Leventall, and Isaac S. Cohen. The last named was a founder of B'nai Jeshurun, who had moved to New York and had since come back to Newark.

A new spirit was infused into the congregation when, in 1861, Edward Rubin came from Easton, Pa. and became its rabbi. A new synagogue building was purchased at the corner of Halsey and Academy Streets. It had originally been the home of the First Baptist Church.

In 1870, Dr. Isidor Kalisch became the rabbi of the congregation.

The congregation occupied in turn several locations until it moved, in 1897, into the synagogue at High Street and 13th Avenue. Throughout this period, the leading spirit was Moritz Berla, who served as president for 25 years. William S. ("Daddy") Rich was equally prominent in the congregation's affairs.

The erection of the present structure in 1924, on Clinton Avenue between South Tenth Street and Shanley Avenue, was a climax to the career of Rabbi Julius Silberfeld who actively served the congregation for almost forty years, from 1902 until 1939, when he became rabbi emeritus. The temple edifice is one of the most impressive in the country and houses what is at present the largest Conservative congregation in the State.

Congregation Oheb Shalom

The third congregation to be organized in Essex County was "Oheb Shalom", formed as the result of a bitter controversy which raged among the early members of B'nai Jeshurun. The membership was divided into opposing groups, each seeking control. In 1860, Rabbi Schwarz, who had served for six years, failed to be reelected by one vote. Bernard Hauser, the president of B'nai Jeshurun, was also defeated for reelection. When the result was announced, several of the leading members submitted their resignations.

At a meeting held by these indignant folk on October 9, 1860, they decided to form a new congregation and adopted the name of Congregation "Oheb Shalom" (אוֹהֵב שָׁלוֹם), meaning "Loving Peace". They held their first Friday evening service at the home of Bernard Hauser, on the third floor of a building on Prince Street, in what was known as the German

section of the city. Later they built a frame building for their synagogue at 32 Prince Street. They looked with pride on the plain, white-painted, wooden structure. In the winter it was heated by a big potbellied iron coal stove which stood in the rear of the synagogue. The congregation was called "the Bohemian Shul" because so many of its members had come from Bohemia.

It was natural for the new congregation to elect, as its first rabbi, Isaac Schwarz, whose candidacy for reelection at B'nai Jeshurun they had supported so ardently. Another of its earliest rabbis was Dr. F. L. Sarner, who wrote operas and stories. During the Civil War he became an Army chaplain and was wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Some of the regulations drawn up by the Board of Directors of the new congregation may be of interest. Though they may appear as strange today, they were not unusual in those days.

Membership dues were 36 cents a month, which entitled each member to synagogue seats for himself and his wife. It is possible that the sum of 36 cents was agreed upon because it is a symbolic number in Jewish tradition. The two letters of the Hebrew term חַי , meaning "life", numerically total 18, and 36 is twice 18.

To insure the equality of the poorest with the wealthiest in the House of God, lots were drawn during the week of Passover to determine the assignment of seats during the ensuing year.

Members were fined for failure to participate properly in the affairs of the congregation. A 25 cent fine was imposed for not attending a general meeting, or for leaving before its conclusion without obtaining the consent of the President. Officers were fined one dollar for the same offense. No member was permitted to enter or leave the synagogue during the reading of the Torah or during the recitation of the "Shma" (שְׁמַע).

In 1880, the women organized the "Miriam Auxiliary", the oldest congregational sisterhood in the community.

The congregation occupied several structures before it erected its present building on High near Kinney Street in 1911. Woodrow Wilson, then Governor of New Jersey and later President of the United States, delivered the principal address at the dedication exercises of this synagogue. Meyer Kussy, a leading member of the congregation, entertained the Governor at dinner in his home at 30 Nairn Place.

The rabbi at the time was Charles Isaiah Hoffman, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He had come

to Oheb Shalom, by now, a Conservative congregation, in 1906, and he served it for 40 years, until his death in 1945.

Congregation "Adas Israel"

The fourth synagogue in the county was Congregation "Adas Israel" (עֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל , Congregation of Israel), founded in Newark in 1873. All the earlier congregations had started as Orthodox synagogues, but did not remain so. Adas Israel, throughout the sixty-two years of its existence, has continued to be Orthodox.

In its early years, Adas Israel was located on Jones Street. Later, it occupied a building on Prince Street which had previously housed Oheb Shalom. As its membership grew, the synagogue moved several times until, in 1939, it erected its present structure on Shephard Avenue.

The congregation was founded largely by Galician Jews, but included also a number of Russian and Polish Jews. Among the earliest rabbis were Rabbi Baer Halperin and Rabbi Hirsch Z. Orliansky.

Adas Israel was strengthened after it combined with several smaller congregations and the Congregation "Hevrah Mishnayes" (חֶבְרָה מִשְׁנַיוֹת), in 1911. The latter's name, meaning "Society for the Study of the Mishna", reflects one of the major aims of the group – to study the "Mishna", a collection of rabbinic teachings, ranking in importance next to the Torah. Among Jews, the study of Jewish law is regarded as an intimate part of divine worship.

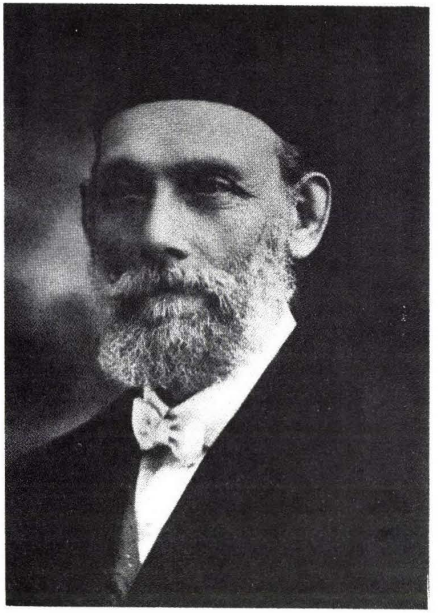
Other congregations in Newark

As their numbers increased, the East European Jews organized many more "shuls". Quite a number of them were small, and others were large. At first, they met in private homes or in rented or makeshift quarters, but in time they acquired their own buildings. A number of the smaller congregations merged and formed larger ones.

One such congregation was "Anshe Russia" (אַנְשֵׁי רוּסְיָא), founded at the turn of the century. Charles Loebel was among its founders. Its original quarters were at Prince and Morton Streets, but later it moved to Kinney Street. Its first spiritual head was Rabbi Hyman Brodsky, an energetic and communal-minded leader, who served his congregation for some 35 years, until his death on Purim in 1937. In the late 1880s, Rabbi Brodsky brought about the unification of the Orthodox community's charitable activities. His leadership was



RABBI ISAAC SCHWARZ



RABBI HYMAN BRODSKY

respected by all segments of the community.

Rabbi Brodsky was succeeded by Rabbi Joseph Konvitz, a great scholar and preacher, who had served as head of the famous "yeshiva" (יְשִׁיבָה) in Safed, Palestine. Rabbi Konvitz was later elected president of the Union of Orthodox Congregations of the United States and Canada.

Upon Rabbi Konvitz's death, Anshe Russia combined with Congregation "Eyn Yaakov" (עֵין יַעֲקֹב) to form the present Congregation "Knesseth Israel" (כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל), now located on Bergen Street.

Somewhat different from the others was Congregation "Young Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל הַצָּעִיר , Yisrael Ha-tsa-ir), founded in 1922 to attract the Orthodox youth. It first met in the basement of another synagogue, and then at the Newark "Y". It opened a school in 1931, and eleven years later it acquired its own building at Weequahic and Maple Avenues, serving a thickly populated neighborhood. Recently ground was broken for a youth center.

The Jewish population was moving into every area of Newark. In 1934, "Beth David (בֵּית דָּוִד) Jewish Center" was established in Ivy Hill, on Sanford Avenue, to cater to the needs of the Jewish residents in the western section of the city.

Today there are over 35 synagogues in Newark, all but four belonging to the Orthodox wing.

In the Oranges and vicinity

"Sharey Tefilo" (שַׁעֲרֵי תְפִלָּה , Gates of Prayer), the oldest of the suburban congregations, was founded in East Orange on October 5, 1874, by eleven men – only one more than required for a "minyan". Of the eleven, five came from one family – Hersh Harris and his four sons. Harris conducted the services for several years and was succeeded in this by another founder, Wolf Gotthainer.

For the first twenty years of its existence, the congregation worshiped in a rented hall on Main Street. In 1877, when the membership had grown to thirty families, a cemetery was purchased in Montclair.

This congregation, like its predecessors in the county, began as an Orthodox synagogue, but in 1880, just a few years after its formation, agitation was started against the custom of separating women from the men worshipers. Gradually it modified its practices, finally becoming a Reform congregation.

In 1895 the congregation moved to quarters of its own on Cleveland Street. The sermon on that occasion was preached

by Dr. Stephen S. Wise, a young New York rabbi, destined to become one of the great leaders of American and world Jewry.

The increase in the Jewish population of the Oranges and the surrounding territory made it necessary for the congregation once more to enlarge its facilities. In 1927 it erected its present temple on Prospect Street, north of Main Street. The dedication sermon was again delivered by Dr. Wise who now enjoyed international fame. Rabbi Samuel Shammai Kaplan was then the spiritual leader, but a fatal accident cut short his career only three years later.

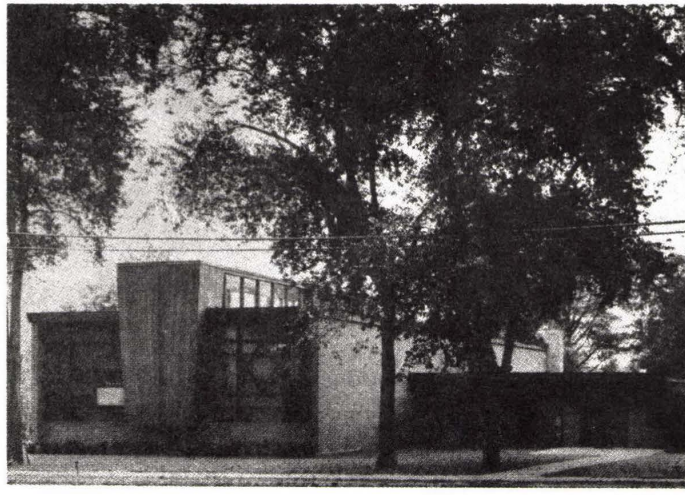
As early as 1898, Marks Weinberg, who had come to Orange a few years earlier, undertook to provide his neighbors with religious services. Temple Sharey Tefilo was leaning towards Reform, and Weinberg and a number of other Jews in the Oranges preferred a more traditional service. Accordingly, Weinberg gathered a group and began holding services on Sabbath morning in his home on Elm, near Park Street. One of the group owned a tavern on Main, near Center Street, which had in the rear a large hall for social functions. When the High Holy Days came, it was in this hall that services were held.

The new congregation was incorporated in 1904 under the name of "Agudath Achim Anshe Orange" (אַגוּדַת אַחִים אַנְשֵׁי אָרעַנדזש , Brotherly League of the People of Orange). Three years later, a three-story building was acquired on Center Street near the Lackawanna Railroad. The first floor was used for the Hebrew School and for living quarters for the teacher, while the second floor was remodeled for synagogue purposes, and the third floor for a balcony for the women. A dozen children were enrolled in the school at the time.

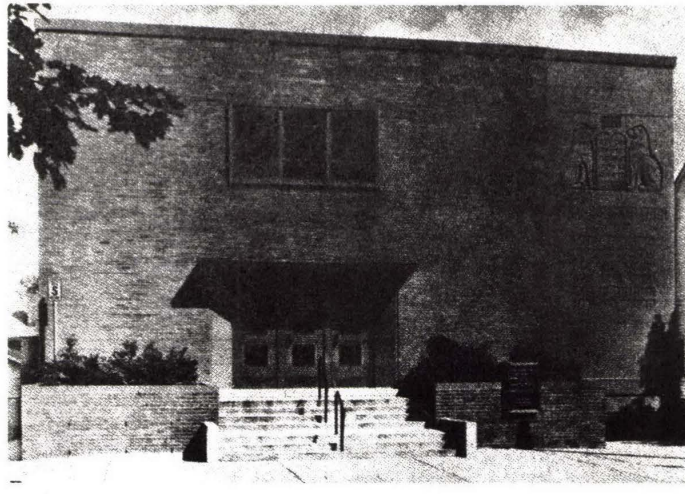
In 1917, the congregation merged with a smaller one and a building was purchased at the corner of Park and William Streets. In 1951 the congregation, now named "Beth Torah" (בֵּית תּוֹרָה , House of Torah), moved into its present synagogue on Reynolds Terrace.

The movement towards the suburbs began some thirty years ago, when families from Newark, New York and other cities acquired homes in the quiet and spacious residential areas around Newark. In time, the Jewish communities in these places became sufficiently large to warrant the establishment of local congregations for the grownups, and schools for the children.

One of the greatest centers of Jewish population in the suburban area developed in South Orange, Maplewood and



B'NAI ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, MILLBURN



SINAI SYNAGOGUE, HILLSIDE

Millburn. Consequently, the Conservative Congregation "Beth El" (בֵּית אֵל , House of God) was formed in 1946. The spacious structure on Irvington Avenue, below South Orange Village Center, was designed first and foremost to provide classrooms for its religious school. It is well to note that, while the congregation, one of the largest in the county by now, as yet has no permanent sanctuary and religious services are held in its assembly hall, a second floor was added to house its growing school.

In 1948 the Reform "Temple Israel" was organized. The congregation purchased a mansion on Scotland Road at Montrose Avenue in South Orange, where classes opened that year. Soon, however, the facilities became cramped, and in 1954 a new wing was added.

The community of Millburn dates back to 1910, when religious services were first held. In 1925 Congregation "B'nai Israel" (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל , Children of Israel) was formed, and soon acquired a building on Lackawanna Street. Its new structure at 162 Millburn Avenue was dedicated in 1950. This building embodies many "modernistic" features and enjoys international fame as an architectural showplace.

The Jewish population in West Orange grew more slowly. "The Jewish Center of West Orange" was founded in 1941 in a structure at 403 Pleasant Valley Way in Pleasantdale. A new synagogue and school building is being constructed at 300 Pleasant Valley Way, to accommodate the greatly expanded community.

Irvington and Hillside

All along, the area around Newark kept attracting an influx of Jewish residents. The early Jews of Irvington, like the Jewish residents of other outlying sections, attended Newark synagogues located nearby, or held services in private homes. In 1922, "Temple B'nai Israel" was established on Nye Avenue west of Irvington Center. Further south, on Chancellor Avenue and Philip Place, is Congregation "Agudas Achim-Bickur Cholim (אֲגוּדַת אַחִים-בִּקּוּר חוֹלִים , Brotherly League - Society for Visiting the Sick), formed in 1934 from a merger of two smaller congregations.

The "Sinai" Congregation (סִינַי) of Hillside was incorporated in 1925, and dedicated its first home at 1479 Maple Avenue in 1932. The building of this synagogue was marked by a neighborly spirit to a point where one of the neighbors "went so far as to donate a few days' work, although himself not a Jew."

Kearny-Arlington

A dry goods store was opened in Kearny by Israel Goldstein as early as 1879, but the first Jew to settle there was Ephraim Deinard, the famous Hebrew writer and book collector. He had come from Russia to Newark in 1890, where he established a Hebrew printing shop on Howard Street, but two years later he moved to Kearny and built himself a house on Windsor Street. A few other families followed his example.

In 1905 Deinard purchased a tract of swamp land "on the outskirts of the town", which he proceeded to develop. One of the streets which he laid out on his property he named "Herzl Street", in memory of the great Zionist leader whose sudden death in 1904 had stunned the Jewish world. Fearful that the city might some day see fit to alter the name, he decided to rename the street in honor of John Hay, the great U.S. Secretary of State. Secretary Hay, who knew Hebrew well and corresponded in that language with Jewish leaders, had interceded on behalf of the Jews in Romania and Russia where persecutions and pogroms were raging at the time.

Deinard had printed, in 1890, the first Hebrew book to be published in Newark, and now he continued to publish Hebrew books in Kearny. It was through his great skill as a book collector that the famous Jewish collections were established at the Library of Congress and at Harvard University.

For a number of years services were held on the High Holy Days at Deinard's home, and later in his famed library on Arlington Avenue. But by 1921, when the community had grown to 250 families, Congregation "B'nai Israel" erected a synagogue at 443 Chestnut Street. In 1954 the congregation moved to its new home at 780 Kearny Avenue in North Arlington.

North and West Essex

The Jews of Belleville established their own synagogue in 1924 at 317 Washington Avenue, after forming Congregation "Agudath Achim Anshe Belleville" three years earlier. Its religious school was named in memory of a former pupil, Lt. Roger Mellion, who was killed in World War II. Ground was broken recently for a modern synagogue-school building.

Nutley's Congregation "B'nai Israel" was founded in 1927, at 192 Centre Street. A modern school building was erected in 1952.

The oldest congregation in West Essex dates back to 1905, when a group of small business people, residents of Montclair and Bloomfield, formed Congregation "Shomrei Emunah" (שׁוֹמְרֵי אֱמוּנָה , Keepers of the Faith). The synagogue was located on Bloomfield Avenue in Glen Ridge, midway between the two towns. The founders consisted of both German and East European Jews. In 1951, the congregation completed its new temple at 67 Park Street in Montclair.

Five years before the establishment of a congregation in Bloomfield, a local chapter of the Order "B'nai Zion" was already in existence. This group organized a Hebrew School even before it formed, in 1920, the congregation which bears its name (בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן , Sons of Zion). The synagogue is located on Franklin Street, just north of Bloomfield Center.

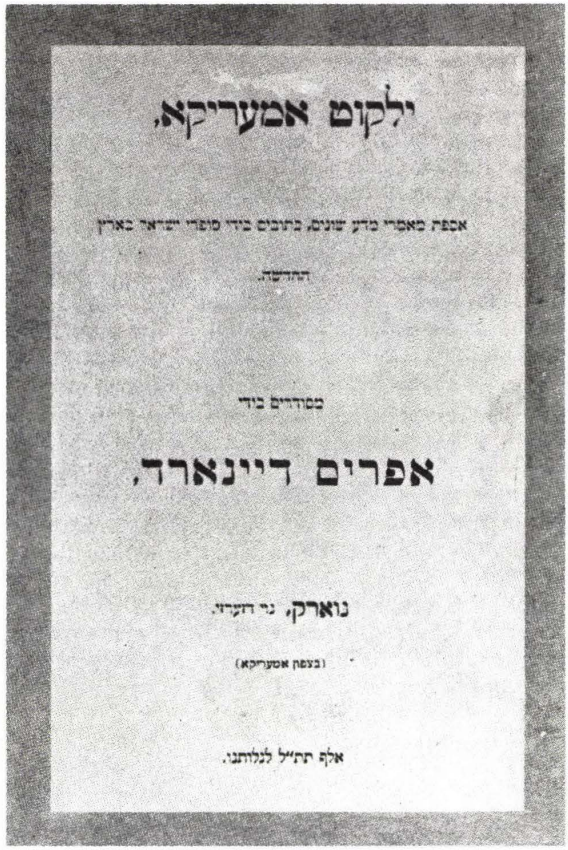
The Jewish Center of Verona was organized in 1936. Its new building, at 54 Grove Avenue, was dedicated in 1950, but the shortage of classroom space has compelled the congregation to launch a campaign for funds for a new school structure.

Most of the Jewish people had come to Caldwell from Newark and New York, but quite a few were from the farming community of Pine Brook to the west. "The Jewish League of Caldwell" was formed in 1920 and met in its building at 6 Washburn Place. In 1953, the congregation, now known by its Hebrew name, "Agudath Israel" (אֲגוּדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל , Society of Israel), erected its new structure at 16 Academy Road. A private residence, adjoining the synagogue grounds, was acquired as a school building.

The youngest communities

In the spring of 1951, there were some 50 Jewish families living in Livingston, most of them with young children. In the fall, High Holy Day services were conducted at the local Grange, and religious school classes were held in rented rooms. So rapid was the growth of the community that, three years later, the school had an enrollment of 300. On December 31, 1954, the first Friday night service took place in new "Livingston Jewish Center", located at 193 East Mount Pleasant Road.

The Jewish residents of Springfield, numbering some seventy-odd families, met in the spring of 1952 to form the "Springfield Jewish Group". Primary classes were set up in the fall, in rented quarters. Two years later, the group took possession of a structure on Baltusrol Way, remodeled it, and opened a full-fledged Hebrew School with an enrollment of some 120 pupils.



TITLE PAGE OF THE HEBREW "YALKUT AMERIKA"

(In translation)

AMERICAN OMNIBUS
A collection of miscellaneous scholarly articles written by
Jewish authors in the New Land.
Edited by
EPHRAIM DEINARD
Newark, New Jersey
(in North America)
In the year 1830 of our Exile (= 1900 C.E.)

Chapter Four

WE STUDY TORAH

The Jewish pioneers who settled in Newark a hundred years ago did what the founders of Jewish communities have done through countless generations – just as soon as they succeeded in establishing a congregation, they opened a school for their children. In this, they heeded the biblical commandment, "Thou shalt teach them (the words of Torah) diligently unto thy children." To worship God properly, a Jew must not only offer prayers but also study the Torah and teach it to his children.

The first school in Essex County, established by B'nai Jeshurun, the pioneer Newark congregation, held sessions on Sunday morning and weekday afternoons. The rabbi of the congregation served also as the teacher of the school. In 1863, B'nai Jeshurun went a step further and founded an all-day school in which both the general and Jewish subjects were taught, under the supervision of the rabbi, Sigmund Kaufman. This school continued in operation for about six years and, when it was closed, its pupils were transferred to the public schools and pursued their Jewish studies after public school hours.

B'nai Abraham, too, in its early days launched a religious school soon after the congregation was organized. The synagogue quarters, located in a rented hall on the second floor of a building on Market and Halsey Streets, were divided by partitions into several classrooms for use by the school.

Oheb Shalom likewise opened a school at once. Classes met on Sunday mornings and weekday afternoons for many years, but around the turn of the century, sessions were held only on week-ends. On Sabbath afternoon the children assembled for a service followed by classes, and on Sunday morning they came again for instruction. Many years later, Oheb Shalom realized that this arrangement did not provide enough hours of instruction and the school went back to its weekday school schedule.

In the early days, at B'nai Jeshurun and Oheb Shalom, German, not English, was the language of instruction, very much as Yiddish was the language used in the schools conducted by the East European Jews of the later period. Though the children spoke English outside, their immigrant parents generally spoke German at home. Their religious teachers,

too, were probably not sufficiently fluent in English to employ it in teaching. Moreover, the parents wanted their children to learn German, which served as a common bond between them and their children.

A Jewish schoolboy a hundred years ago

Here is the story of how one Jewish boy, Henry Lowy, spent his time in the early days of the Newark Jewish settlement.

Henry was an infant six months old when in April, 1849, his parents moved from New York to Newark. He was evidently a bright lad, for at the age of ten he entered Newark High School. He was the only Jewish student in the school at the time. Practically all the other Jewish boys, like the children of other poor people, were compelled to drop out of school long before they got to high school. They had to go to work and help their parents support their families. In 1860, when he was only twelve, Henry completed his high school studies. He was the youngest graduate in the history of the school and its first Jewish graduate.

At the time he entered high school, Henry lived on Hume Street (now Badger Avenue), near 18th Avenue. There were, of course, no buses or even trolleys at the time, and young Henry was obliged to get up very early each morning to cover the mile-long distance from his home to the high school on Washington and Linden Streets. He got there before the day's opening exercises and remained until school was dismissed at four o'clock.

But his education was not complete without a Jewish training, so every day, after high school, Henry went to Hebrew School where he remained until six o'clock. Then he started on his long tramp home. In the winter time he frequently carried a lantern to light his way in the darkness, while trudging through heaps of snow and deep puddles which lay in the unpaved streets. He was away from home since before eight o'clock in the morning. Yet after he had his supper at seven, he sat down to prepare his lessons for the following day. It was, no doubt, a hard life, and it took a good deal of strength to carry on, but "it made men out of boys".

What were the Jewish schools like?

The Jewish immigrant, who came to Newark as an adult, had received his early Jewish education in the "Old

Country." In Germany, he had attended a Jewish school maintained by the community, where he studied the Siddur (חֻמָּשׁ), "Humash" (סִדּוּר , the Five Books of Moses), and German subjects. If he hailed from Eastern Europe, his parents had sent him to a private "heder" (חֶדֶר) or one-room school. His teacher, the "melammed" (מְלַמֵּד), conducted classes in his own overcrowded home and received tuition fees directly from the parents. The orphan and the poor boy, whose parents could not afford to send him to a private "heder", attended the Talmud Torah school maintained by the community for this purpose. The subjects of study, in the "heder" as in the Talmud Torah, were the Hebrew reading or "Ivre" (from the word "Ivri", עִבְרִי , meaning Hebrew), "Humash" and a little "Mishna". School lasted from morning till evening.

When the immigrants arrived in this country, they naturally established the type of school they had been accustomed to in their native lands. However, since their children attended public school during the day, Jewish studies had to take place in the afternoon and on weekends.

The families that belonged to the large congregations sent their children to the schools conducted by the synagogues. Other families sent their children to a private "heder". Here the "melammed" tried to teach his charges in the same manner as he had done "back home". But his efforts here proved less successful. In the first place, since his pupils were away at public school most of the day, his teaching hours were few and could not earn him enough to live on. Compelled to spend the early part of the day at some other kind of work, perhaps peddling, or hawking old clothes, it was a tired and discouraged man who faced the classes of unruly boys in the late afternoon and in the evening. Also, the "melammed" an immigrant himself, with a scant knowledge of English and of the strange ways of "Columbus's country", could not easily keep up with the American ways which his pupils were picking up so readily in the street and in the school. Small wonder, then, that the instruction was dull, drab and uninteresting. Boys stayed on until they were Bar Mitsva, and not one day longer. Practically no girls attended. These children grew up without a proper understanding or enjoyment of Jewish life.

Some of the "melammedim" served as private tutors, going from house to house. Their stock in trade was the Siddur which was the sole text used, and from it the children were taught "Ivre". This type of education, with rare exceptions, was no better than that of the "heder". And some Jewish

children were receiving no Jewish training whatsoever.

Soon, parents and community leaders realized that good Jewish schools must be established, schools with a better program of instruction and better teachers, schools which might command their children's respect. These educational institutions, they felt, should be supported by all elements in the Jewish community. Called "Talmud Torah" (תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה), these schools differed from their East European model in one major respect – the American Talmud Torah was to be a school not only for the poor but, like the public school, it was to serve rich and poor alike.

Plaut Memorial Hebrew Free School

The first communal Hebrew school in Newark was the Hebrew Free School organized in 1888 by the Hebrew Education Society. As its English name implies, the school charged no tuition, and its expenses were covered from membership dues and donations.

In its appeal for contributions, issued "to the Israelites of this City" over the signatures of the rabbis of Congregations B'nai Jeshurun and Oheb Shalom, and of its president, Rabbi Isaac Schwarz, the Society sounded the alarm over the possibility that, without proper Jewish education, Jewish children might "fall a prey to the Conversionists, who try to allure them from their faith and become apostates to the religion of their fathers." The object of the Society was to make of the children of the Russian immigrants "strict adherents to our faith, good, patriotic, law-abiding citizens of the United States." It was stressed, furthermore, that "this school is not, and will never be a 'Cheder' of the olden times," and that admission would be refused to all children not attending public schools.

A year after its founding, the Plaut family erected on Prince, near Spruce Street, a building for the school which was renamed the "Plaut Memorial Hebrew Free School", in memory of David and Simon Plaut, two of the city's best known merchants.

Both boys and girls were admitted to this school which held sessions on Sunday morning and on weekday afternoons. On Sabbath afternoons, the children conducted a "Minha" (מִנְחָה) service, at which the rabbis took turns delivering the weekly address each week. The school provided a traditional program of studies, though many of its supporters were members of Reform congregations. Meyer S. Hood headed it for many years, and was succeeded by the great

Jewish scholar Caspar Levias, former professor at the Hebrew Union College, and author of an Aramaic grammar. The school was disbanded in 1938, largely because the neighborhood in which it was located had very few Jewish residents left.

Other communal schools

As the Jewish population in Newark grew, additional school facilities became necessary. To meet this demand, the "Talmud Torah of Newark" was established in 1899. This time the founders came from the ranks of the East European immigrants themselves, who had become Americanized enough to be able to undertake a communal venture. The school was first located in a store on Broome Street, later moving to Sterling Street, in the "Hill" section of Newark. In this building it attained an enrollment of 700 pupils. Later when the school was transferred to its quarters on Morton Street near 13th Street, Charles Ehrenkrantz assumed the principalship. Its rich program of studies included, in addition to the traditional subjects, modern Hebrew literature and Jewish history. It was staffed, moreover, with competent teachers. The school achieved a fine reputation and produced alumni imbued with a reverence for Jewish learning and tradition, some of whom have attained positions of leadership, in this community and elsewhere.

Later, the Newark Talmud Torah gave up its Morton Street building because the Jewish population had moved from the neighborhood. It has since transferred its quarters to Osborne Terrace, south of Hawthorne Avenue.

The Hebrew Academy of Essex County

An important milestone in Jewish education in the community was the establishment, in 1943, of the "Yeshiva of Newark" (יְשִׁיבָה דְנוּאַרְק), an all-day school in which both the general and Hebrew subjects are taught within the hours of the regular school day. There are many private schools throughout the country, some maintained by individuals, others by interested groups, in which the program of studies differs in some ways from that in the public schools. Jewish groups, too, had conducted such special schools, or "yeshivot", for many years. In Newark, however, it was the first of this kind since Temple B'nai Jeshurun opened such a school eighty years earlier.

In 1948, under the leadership of Samuel Klein, the

Yeshiva merged with the Talmud Torah to provide a system of intensive Orthodox Hebrew education. This network, known as the "Hebrew Academy of Essex County", conducts, in addition to the all-day school, a number of afternoon schools throughout the city.

Some 700 boys and girls are enrolled in the various branch schools of the Hebrew Academy. About a third of this number attend the Kindergarten and eight elementary grades of the Yeshiva. Its budget is met by tuition fees paid by parents, donations to its scholarship fund and a subsidy from the Jewish Education Association.

Congregational schools

Of the 6,500 Jewish children enrolled in 1954 in Jewish schools in Essex County, four out of five attend congregational schools.

We have seen how every one of the early congregations in the county proceeded to establish a religious school for the children of its members. At first, the classes in these schools were taught by the rabbi of the congregation. But as the school enrollment grew in numbers and as the rabbi's duties in the congregation and in the community multiplied, it became necessary to engage trained teachers and principals, some of whom would devote their entire time and energy to school matters. Many of the early teachers, especially those who taught only once a week, in the Sunday School, gave their services free. Oheb Shalom was one of the first schools to pay its Sunday School teachers. The congregations now took on financial responsibility for their schools, meeting the expenses from tuition fees, congregational funds and other sources. This is a far cry from the "heder", in which the "melammed" collected his fees personally from each parent.

In recent years, Jewish education has become the major concern of Jewish parents and of farsighted leaders, so that frequently it has been the prime reason for the organization of new congregations or community groups. In community after community, as we have seen, religious school classes were functioning even before synagogues were up.

The schools connected with synagogues are not alike in all respects. Some teach more than others. Some are large and established schools; others are new, struggling to develop a sound program. Some are housed in magnificent buildings, while others do the best they can with inadequate facilities. Again, while in some schools enrollment is open

to everyone, others admit only members' children.

The affairs of the congregational schools are managed by a school board or an education committee, composed of members of the congregation, which works with the rabbi and the principal to improve the program and to set policy.

Other schools

A somewhat different kind of school is "Bet Yeled" (בֵּית יֶלֶד , Child's House), Jewish Folk School, which is not connected with any congregation. Founded in 1950 by a group of parents associated with the Labor Zionist movement, it is conducted as a cooperative venture, by the parents of the pupils and others who desire a Hebrew Zionist education. The school is housed in the Newark Jewish Cultural Center, on Clinton Place near Hawthorne Avenue.

Grownups study, too

An elementary Jewish school provides its pupils only with the foundation of Jewish training. Just as graduation from an elementary public school is followed by junior and senior high school, so too, Jewish studies on a high school level are available to graduates of elementary Jewish schools. Some of the larger schools conduct their own high school classes. For others, there is the Central Hebrew High School which has branches in several parts of the county. In all, some 400 young people continue their Jewish studies on a high school level, some of them attending Hebrew high schools in New York City.

However, Jewish study is not an activity for the children and youth alone, but also for grownups of all ages. Throughout history, the synagogue has been not only a House of Prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה , Bet Tefilla), but also a House of Study (בֵּית מִדְרָשׁ , Bet Midrash), for young and old alike.

Essex County synagogues and temples offer various programs of Jewish study for their adult members. These are taught by the rabbi and by other instructors. Many hundreds of Jewish adults in the county attend these classes.

Courses of a more formal nature are offered at the JEA "College of Jewish Studies".

The Jewish Education Association (JEA)

Before the Jewish Education Association of Essex County was formed, the Jewish schools in this area functioned as



PRESENTATION OF HONORARY "HAYIL" AWARD

Cecil J. Lurie, president of the Jewish Education Association, presents award to Miss Sarah Kussy, communal leader and founder of Newark chapter of Hadassah, in June 1952.

separate units and knew little of each other's work. One of the purposes of the JEA was to encourage each of the schools – school board, parents, teachers and pupils – to do its best, and to bring together the people from the different schools so that they might learn from each other's experience.

Organized in 1937 by communal leaders of great vision, including Samuel I. Kessler, Michael A. Stavitsky, and the late Philip J. Schottland, it was meant to serve as a Board of Education for all the Jewish schools in the county – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and non-congregational.

The JEA serves some thirty-odd schools, with more than 200 teachers.

For pupils in the elementary schools, JEA maintains the "Hayil" (חַיִל) Honor Society and the "Reena" (רְנָה) Interschool Choir. It conducts the "Central Hebrew High School" for graduates of the elementary Jewish schools. For years it offered advanced courses to high school graduates, serious-minded adults and teachers wishing to increase their professional skills. These courses were merged, in the fall of 1954, in the "College of Jewish Studies", which some day may be authorized to grant academic degrees. One of the main objectives of the College is to train new teachers for the Jewish schools in the community.

The JEA sponsors a Board of License which passes on the professional qualifications of Jewish teachers and principals. It maintains a library of several thousand volumes, for teachers, students and the public at large.

The JEA is concerned with spreading Jewish culture outside the Jewish schools as well. It helped to introduce Hebrew classes at Weequahic High School in Newark. Thanks to its efforts also, courses in the Hebrew language and Jewish civilization are taught at Rutgers University in Newark.

Chapter Five

WE HELP ONE ANOTHER

Worship and study of Torah are twin foundations of the life of the Jewish community as of the individual Jew, but they must be accompanied by a third – deeds of kindness (גְּמִלוּת חֲסָדִים , Gemillut Hasadim).

The Jew has never forgotten that "Israelites are accountable for one another (יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֵבִים זֶה בָּזֶה), and Jewish history has provided numerous occasions for mutual help. The immigrants who came to these shores, for the most part, were poor and ignorant of the ways of the New World. They needed help, and received it. Those who had come earlier and established themselves somewhat, held out a helping hand to those that arrived a little later. The well and the strong steadied the ill and the unfortunate. Those older or wiser guided the young or the helpless.

In the early days of immigration, the synagogues themselves dispensed "tsedaka" (צְדָקָה , righteousness, righteous deeds). They gave relief to the poor on every occasion, particularly for the Passover (מָעוֹת חִטִּים , Maot Hittim, or money for Passover flour) and the other festivals. Later, however, with the coming of the great masses of immigrants, the number of the needy increased considerably. To meet the situation, special benevolent societies were formed. Though they frequently met in synagogues, they were community-wide in scope and not a part of any one congregation. These organizations, in fact, helped to bind the entire community together.

Mutual aid

The oldest Jewish women's organization in Essex County and, for that matter, in the State of New Jersey, was the "Friendly Sisters", started by a group of fourteen women in October 1852. Theirs was a mutual aid association, that is. the members undertook to help one another in case of need. The annual dues of five dollars entitled the members to benefits of five dollars a week for a fixed period, in case of illness. As the years passed, many of the members no longer needed these benefits, and in 1927 the Society changed its character and became a relief organization which distributed milk to undernourished children and aided the chronic sick, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Nine hatmakers, in 1885, organized a "Kranken-Unterstitzung Verein", or Sick Benefit Society. This society served as a model for perhaps a hundred similar groups which were commonly known by the initials of the German name, "K.U.V."

Immigrants often banded together in a "landsmanshaft", which was composed of Jews who had come from the same town or locality in Eastern Europe. In some cases, Newark residents joined the organizations in nearby New York City; in others, they established their own local branches. The immigrant, who felt strange in the American environment, was very much at home in his own "landsmanshaft" which, in addition to social opportunities, provided him with various kinds of insurance, loans and other benefits.

More recently, as the memory of a common geographical origin has weakened, the "landsmanshaft" has given way to the "family circle" which gathers together members of the same family on various occasions. There are many such "family circles" at present in the county.

The fraternal orders, likewise, provided mutual aid benefits, but in addition, these great national organizations brought together people of different origins and religious affiliations. Tabor Lodge, of "B'nai B'rith", was formed in Newark as early as 1856, only 13 years after the founding of that great international order. "Ezekiel Lodge", destined to play such an important part in the affairs of the local Jewish community, followed 11 years later.

Other fraternal orders founded lodges in the county, among them "Brith Abraham", "Brith Sholom", "B'nai Zion", "Workmen's Circle" ("Arbeter Ring") and the "Jewish National Workers' Alliance" ("Farband"). Essex men have attained high national offices in these orders. A. Sigmund Kanengieser was elected Grand Master of B'rith Sholom in 1935. Irving L. Hodes is currently serving as president of B'rith Abraham.

Aiding the wayfarer

Jews in all ages were compelled to travel a good deal, often through unfriendly territory. The Jewish wayfarer had the additional problem of finding kosher food. "Hahnasat Orehim" (הַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים), or hospitality to the stranger, has, therefore, long been an important "mitsva", and special societies were formed for this purpose.

In an age when hundreds of thousands of Jews were on the move, this "mitsva" took on special meaning. Already

in the 1880s, a need arose for helping homeless Jewish travelers who came through the Oranges. These were referred to the "Montefiore Aid Society", an organization composed of women associated with Temple Sharey Tefilo. They gave the travelers used clothing, or helped them with cash to enable them to move on towards their destination. Sometimes they helped the strangers find work and settle in the community.

More recently, a "Hahnasat Orehim", or Hebrew Sheltering Home, was established in Newark and is now located at 765 High Street. This institution provides food, lodging and other aid to Jewish travelers requiring it.

Caring for children

In January, 1861, just a few months before Fort Sumter was fired on, a group of fourteen prominent Newark Jews started an organization bearing a German name, which was later changed to "The Hebrew Benevolent Society". From the start, the Society cared for several orphans whom they boarded with private families, and later they decided to make this their special function. In 1886, they purchased a three-story building at 232 Mulberry Street as a "Bet Yetomin" (בֵּית יְתוֹמִים) or orphans' home, but within a few years they required larger quarters. However, it took the institution almost twenty years to raise the funds and erect the present home at 534 Clinton Avenue.

In 1911 there were as many as 67 children at the Home. Today the number is much smaller, because the present practice calls for boarding out as many children as possible in foster homes where they can live in normal family surroundings.

In 1948 the Children's Home merged with other child care organizations into a single large agency, the Jewish Child Care Association. This communal agency looks after parentless children as well as children troubled with behavior problems.

Since the Children's Home does not adhere to the dietary laws, a group of Orthodox women established the Hebrew Orphanage and Sheltering Home around 1923. This institution was supported in its early years by weekly payments of five cents by a large number of members. The first building of the Orphanage was located at Homestead Park but later it bought and occupied its present quarters at 141 Lincoln Avenue.

Helping Families

Clothing the ill-clad was the function of Jewish groups known as "Malbish Arumim" (מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרוּמִים) societies. In 1885, thirty young Newark women formed the "Hebrew Ladies Sewing and Personal Service Club", whose members made or mended garments for the poor. The club grew and expanded its activities. Members trained Jewish girls to sew, and later, when the group secured its own quarters at 129 Mulberry Street, they established an employment service to assist girls in finding jobs. Handicapped girls who could not obtain work elsewhere were employed in the society's own shop. Thus the society helped many Jewish women to help themselves - a very important phase of "tsedaka".

Relief societies, known as "Ozer Dallim" (עוֹזֵר דַּלִּים , Aiding the Poor) were active in all Jewish communities. Numerous organizations of this kind arose among the Jews in Newark. One of them, typical of many others, was the "Hebrew Ladies Immediate Aid Society", launched in 1890. This organization assisted needy Jewish families with food, shelter, "matsot" for Passover, fuel and other necessities.

The Hebrew Benevolent Society, which founded the Children's Home, had a Relief Committee. From the activities of this group, the Jewish Family Service Association was organized in the early 1900s. The purpose of this body was to aid the Jewish immigrants, but in time it took over the work of a number of relief organizations. It not only helped needy Jews financially, but also offered them guidance in solving their family and personal problems. The Association has become the recognized community agency for providing these forms of assistance to those requiring them.

Caring for the sick

The custom of visiting the sick was always considered by Jews as a great "mitsva", known as "Bikkur Holim" (בִּקּוּר חוֹלִים). Special societies were organized, which had as their main purpose not only showing sympathy to the sick by visiting them but also, in the case of the poor, providing them with medical care and other needs.

At first the "mitsva" of "Bikkur Holim" was performed by synagogue societies, but in 1900 a group of women formed the "Daughters of Israel Hospital Association". It raised the sum of $4,000, secured a charter to establish a hospital and purchased a two-story wooden frame residence on Kinney and High Streets. In 1902, the Association merged with the "Hebrew

Hospital and Dispensary", which had been formed by a group of doctors and laymen, to establish the Beth Israel Hospital, with a capacity of 21 beds. A new building, with 80 beds, replaced the old one, on the same site, six years later. The present hospital plant on Lyons Avenue was erected in 1928, with a capacity of 500 beds, at a cost of nearly four million dollars. Sixty per cent of its beds are maintained for the use of those who cannot pay the regular rates.

In building a Jewish hospital, the community wished not only to add to the hospital facilities in the city for the care of Jewish and non-Jewish patients, but also to provide a distinctly Jewish institution where Jews might feel more at home. Then too, Jewish physicians have frequently found it difficult to get internships or residencies in hospitals, and the Jewish institution helped in this manner also.

A splendid School of Nursing was developed at the Hospital. Interestingly enough, it was here that Paula Ben-Gurion, the wife of the great Israeli statesman, received her training.

Under the leadership of physicians of the caliber of Dr. Victor Parsonnet and Dr. Max Danzis, Beth Israel Hospital has become, in its half-century of existence, one of the finest institutions of its kind in the country. It has contributed much to medical research. Perhaps its most outstanding work has been done in the field of the diseases of the blood.

There are in the county other agencies that care for the sick. Among them is the Home for the Chronic Sick, opened in 1913, and now located in Irvington. The Theresa Grotta Convalescent Home, now in Caldwell, was established in 1916, in honor of the eightieth birthday of Theresa Grotta, one of the early Jewish settlers in the county, who devoted a long life to the needs and interests of the Jewish community.

Essex Jews are, of course, doing their share to support nationwide health organizations, such as the Jewish National Hospital in Denver, Deborah Sanatorium, and others.

The aged and the infirm

Grandparents and great-grandparents are delightful people to have around, but sometimes it is difficult to care for them properly at home. They may be feeble, or sick, and may require constant medical attention. Or they may have no children able to support them when they can no longer earn a living. In some cases, too, they cannot keep up their religious practices in the homes of their children who may not be as observant as they would like them to be.

In 1904, fifteen women met at the home of Mrs. Blume

Hollander for the purpose of establishing a "Moshav Zekeenim" (מוֹשָׁב זְקֵנִים), a home where people could spend their old age in peace and quiet and have the recreation and care they require. Two years later, the Daughters of Israel Home for the Aged was opened in a building on Sterling Street, which housed 18 old people. At first, the officers and directors of the organization themselves volunteered to cook and care for the guests but, as time went on, they employed professional help. In 1928, after the Beth Israel Hospital moved out, the Home for the Aged took over the building, to which a new structure was added several years later. The Home now has a capacity of 165 residents.

Helping people help themselves

According to the great Jewish sage Maimonides (1135-1204), the highest degree of "tsedaka" is rendering the needy person the kind of aid that will make him self-supporting. This, incidentally, is in line with the modern social work concept of rehabilitation.

The free loan societies (גְּמִלוּת חֲסָדִים , Gemillut Hasadim) were created to serve this purpose. From them the new, or "green" immigrant could borrow funds to get started in business, or to tide him over a trying period. These organizations lent money to deserving people without charging interest.

Newark Jewry had several of those societies, the most important of which is the Hebrew Free Loan Association. Founded by Rabbi Hyman Brodsky and Rabbi Mordecai Radin, for many years its work was directed by the beloved "Pop" (Ike) Lilien. It makes its loans on a much more liberal basis than a bank, nor does it require security. Its work is confidential, to avoid embarrassing the people it serves.

Getting together

The cultural and social activities in the days of the early Newark settlers were religious in nature and centered around the synagogue. There were all types of study groups which met on the Sabbath and other days for the study of various Jewish texts.

Soon, however, a demand arose on the part of the young people for a cultural club of a non-religious character, and in time a number of such groups were formed. Typical among them was the "Daniel Webster Debating Society" which was organized shortly before the Civil War. It met in the basement

of the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue on Washington Street. The interest of this group in American politics is reflected in the debate on the question, "Ought Slavery to be Abolished?"

The young people also felt the need of a place for their social activities. The synagogue could not offer space for their newly acquired recreational interests. A special meeting to deal with this problem was held on December 1877, in the vestry rooms of B'nai Jeshurun. It was then agreed to establish a "Young Men's Hebrew Association" (YMHA), patterned after the YMCA of those days. Franklin Marx was chosen president.

For the first three years, the "Y" was housed in Library Hall on Market Street, near Broad, where the Woolworth's store is now located. In 1881, the "Y" leased a three-story brick building at 301 Pine Street, which it renamed "Hebrew Hall". This building contained a library, gymnasium, bowling alley, a hall for dances and plays, and a canteen.

All went well for a time, until the "Y" began losing its membership to competing groups. One of those was the mysterious "NNC" or "No Name Club", which was later to become the "Progress Club". In 1898, the "Y" shut its doors. Efforts to revive it failed, until a small band of determined young people took matters in their own hands.

By the end of 1919, one year after the young men of the community came marching back from the War, the group succeeded in obtaining two thousand members. Later, several similar groups were brought together and united to form a large association. The interest of Felix Fuld and Louis Bamberger, merchants and philanthropists, was enlisted, and the new organization, under the leadership of Abe J. Dimond, launched a drive for a building to house its activities. In 1922, the imposing YM & YWHA structure was erected on High and Kinney Streets.

The "Y", later renamed the Jewish Center, has served as a meeting place for a large number of social, cultural and recreational organizations and groups. The first executive director was Dr. Aaron G. Robison, a rabbi who did much to fashion the character of the association.

In addition to its regular social, cultural, recreational and athletic activities for youth and adults, the Center conducts several "Clubs for the Elderly" and maintains a number of nursery schools. In the summer it operates a large day camp. It is also associated with the "Felix Fuld Camps", sponsored by the New Jersey Federation of Jewish Centers.

From the Newark "Daily Advertiser" Dec. 28, 1877

An Israelitish Movement.

A circular has been issued to the Israelites of Newark, representing the necessity of establishing in this city a society for the promotion of learning, an instrument for encouraging education, higher culture, and intellectural aspiration amongst their coreligionists. Having well considered the object in view, the signers invite the Jewish people to a meeting at the rooms of Ezekiel Lodge, No. 99, I. O. B. B., corner Broad and Clinton streets, on Sunday, December 30th, at 2 P. M. It is proposed to establish a Young Men's Hebrew Association for literary pursuits in reading and lectures on the Jewish history, literature and philosophy. Prominent members of the New York Association will be present. Among the signers are Rev. Jos. Leucht, S. Scheuer, L. Lehman, B. Strauss, Elias Berla, Jos. Goetz, Jos. Feder, M. Straus, A. Bornstein, M. Newman and other leading Israelites.



FRANKLIN MARX

First president of the YMHA, elected in 1877. He was followed in office by his brother-in-law, Jacob Holzner. A grandson, Gustav P. Heller, became president of the YM & YWHA in 1947.

Because the Jewish population was moving away from the High and Kinney Streets neighborhood, the Center, beginning with 1940, opened branches in the Weequahic section of Newark and in the suburban areas.

The continued flow of the Jewish population away from downtown Newark finally brought about the sale of the main building in October 1954. Plans have been made for the erection of a new Center in the Weequahic section, the most thickly populated Jewish neighborhood of Newark at the present time.

Unlike most other institutions in America, such as the synagogue, the school and the "tsedaka" organizations, the Jewish community center was a new institution in Jewish life, created to meet a special need. This need grew out of the conditions of American life. The Jews who settled in Newark, like others throughout the land, had come from different countries, spoke a variety of languages and worshiped in different synagogues. They seemed to have little in common. Their children, however, learned to know one another when they met on the neutral ground of the Center, and soon the barriers of distrust and misunderstanding came tumbling down as they worked and played together. Many of our present Jewish leaders received their early training in communal living within the walls of the Center.

In this way, the Center, along with the fraternal orders and other national organizations, helped to mold the separate elements of the Jewish population – Orthodox, Conservative and Reform; German, Russian and Polish — into an American Jewish community.

Chapter Six

ONE PEOPLE

Despite the fact that in the last two thousand years Jews have settled in virtually every land on the face of the earth and have been physically separated from one another, the sense of unity and brotherliness has never left them. Worshiping in synagogues whose architecture ranged from the Chinese pagoda to cathedral Gothic and American Colonial, they yet prayed to the One God, Giver of the Torah. Speaking a multitude of languages – from Hindustani and Persian to German and English – they had a common bond in the Hebrew language, the "holy tongue" (לְשׁוֹן קֹדֶשׁ , leshon kodesh). Owing political allegiance each to the country of his residence, they were imbued by their common history, going back to Abraham and Moses, with a strong feeling of kinship with every other Jew. At the approach of each new moon, synagogues throughout the world have reechoed with the declaration, "Haverim Kol Yisrael" (חֲבֵרִים כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל) - "all Israel is one fellowship".

The Jewish settlers in the New World remained faithful to this tradition. The earlier arrival, the Sephardi, came to the assistance of the German Jew who followed him years later. In turn, the German Jew stretched out a brother's hand to the East European who came after him. Still later, American Jewry welcomed the refugees from the Nazi terror.

A ticket to freedom

A Jew, entering the gates of the land of liberty, did not forget those he left behind in the lands of poverty and persecution. No sooner had he started earning a livelihood, however skimpy, than he would set aside each week a few cents, a dollar maybe, with the thought of saving up enough for a "shifskarte", a ticket for a passage to America. This ticket might be for a member of his own family – for some had come all alone at first – or for some other relative, or perhaps for a close friend or some other townsman.

Later, as the immigration laws became more complicated, most people required assistance in their efforts to bring over their dear ones. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was organized to deal with this problem.

With the rise of Hitlerism in the 1930s, this work expanded, and the "National Coordinating Committee" came

into being. Later, this work was taken over by the "United Service for New Americans " (USNA). Tens of thousands of families, many of them penniless, were helped to flee from Germany and the neighboring countries. In Newark it was the "Newark Coordinating Committee" that undertook the job of looking after the newcomers. It provided them with homes, clothing and food, found schools for their children and brought them together with the older residents. Thousands of families were helped in this manner to find a home in Essex County.

Of great assistance in this work was the National Council of Jewish Women. The local chapter, founded in 1912, had for many years conducted Americanization classes for the poor immigrants who did not know any English. Now, through its Bureau of Service to the Foreign Born, it set up special classes in English for the newcomers and prepared them for their naturalization as American citizens. It also assisted them in legal matters.

Some of these newcomers were professional people, such as physicians, lawyers and scientists, who after a period of adjustment found no difficulty in establishing themselves in their adopted country. There were many others, though, who had no trade or profession or who, as a result of their sufferings at the hands of the Nazis, were no longer able to work at their former occupation. The Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) concerned itself with this problem. Whenever possible, it found suitable jobs for those who were skilled workers. For the unskilled, it instituted a program of training, in line with their individual aptitudes, discovered by means of psychological testing and other techniques. Still others had to be retrained for the kinds of jobs that were available. Jewish and non-Jewish employers cooperated with the JVS by hiring these new Americans who, in time, proved their value as willing and efficient workers. In this way, the uprooted victims of persecution became useful and self-supporting members of their new community.

The JVS does not confine itself to new immigrants. It helps to place the handicapped and the elderly in suitable jobs and renders assistance to all who seek its services. It is concerned, too, with guiding young people in choosing a career.

Keeping in touch

Having put thousands of miles between them and their old homes, the immigrants were anxious to maintain their

contact with Jewish communities the world over. Keeping abreast of developments in Jewish life and Jewish thought was to them, as it is to us, an elementary necessity.

At first, American Jews were dependent on Jewish newspapers printed in German in this country, and on the Yiddish and Hebrew periodicals imported from the centers of Eastern Europe. Later, as the great Yiddish dailies made their appearance in New York, they were read avidly, as were the numerous English language magazines.

It was a welcome event when, in 1910, Mordecai Mansky began publication of the "Newarker Wochenblat" (נואַרקער וואָכענבלאט), a Yiddish weekly which appeared until 1914. Another weekly was launched in 1923 by Dr. Isaac Unterman, a textbook writer and essayist still active today. "Der Morgenshtern" (דער מאָרגענשטערן) continued until 1935. Both publications afforded an outlet to local journalists, writers and poets, who were also contributing material to the New York periodicals.

One of these was Mitchell M. Kaplan, poet and writer, who was noted also as a collector of Judaica. In 1942 he donated his important collection of books and manuscripts to New York University.

The first Anglo-Jewish publication to appear locally was the "Jewish Chronicle", a weekly founded in 1921 by Anton Kaufman. It was succeeded, upon his death in 1943, by the "Jewish Times", and later by the "Jewish News", which is published by the Jewish Community Council.

Beginning with the 1880s, the Yiddish stage in America produced great playwrights and actors, and enjoyed tremendous popularity among the masses. In the theater, the recent immigrant could enjoy all over again the life he had left behind, a life which he could not but miss now and then, and which was the life still lived by many of his relatives and former neighbors overseas. Some of the plays he saw dealt with the life of the immigrant in the New World, and described its successes and disappointments, its tragedy and humor.

Newarkers flocked to the many theaters on New York's East Side. But in 1922, Elving's Metropolitan Theater opened on Montgomery and Charlton Streets in Newark, where Yiddish plays and operettas were presented for 22 years.

Rescue overseas

While the Jewish population in America was growing by leaps and bounds, through the immigration of tens and

hundreds of thousands of families, millions of Jews continued to live in their old home across the sea. For, even when conditions were not of the best, people were reluctant to leave familiar places, relatives and friends, for strange and distant lands. At times conditions grew even worse, when mere persecution would turn to massacre. The Kishinev pogroms, which raged in Russia in 1903-05, aroused American Jewry as no other event had in its brief history. Despite disunity and lack of mutual understanding among the various elements in the community, American Jews spoke up in protest in one voice, through the American Jewish Committee then especially organized by men like Jacob H. Schiff and Louis Marshall. Newark leaders helped to set up the Committee. On this and on many another occasion, the Committee enlisted the cooperation of the United States Government in working to ensure the safety and the rights of Jews living in other lands.

Later, in 1919, following the First World War, the American Jewish Congress was founded for a similar purpose, with the participation of many organizations. Newark Jewry sent a delegation to the Congress, which was elected by popular vote.

The fight for the legal rights and physical safety of the Jews overseas was not enough, however, to keep them from starvation. In the wake of the First World War and of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the millions of Jews in Eastern Europe were decimated by hunger, disease and massacre. Their more fortunate brethren in blessed America did not shut their eyes to their terrible plight. To do the job of rescue better, they united in forming the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Campaigns for funds were started in every Jewish community in America, and millions of dollars were raised annually for the relief of Jews in foreign lands. Essex County did its share. The magnificent generosity of American Jewry in this noble cause, the greatest perhaps in the long history of the Jewish people, was matched only by the gratitude of the millions of beneficiaries who owed their very lives to the "Joint", as this organization was affectionately called by them.

Impressive as was the record of the JDC in the early years of its existence, its work reached undreamed of proportions in the years following the Second World War. Millions of Jews in Eastern Europe had remained in their homelands when, in 1924, U.S. laws closed the door to immigration from those lands. Now, with the outbreak of the war, these Jews found themselves in the power of the

conquering German armies and their satellites.

As the smoke of war lifted in country after country in Europe, the world stood aghast at the sight of the handiwork of the Nazis. Six million Jews — fully one third of the entire Jewish People — lay murdered, victims of gas chambers, limepits and slave labor. The advancing armies of the Allied Nations, under the command of General Eisenhower, liberated hundreds of thousands of ghostlike inmates of concentration camps. Quickly transferred to hundreds of makeshift "Displaced Persons'" camps in Germany, Austria and Italy, these "D.P.s" needed medical care, food, clothing and, above all, the care of loving brothers, for most of them had lost wife, children, parents and all relatives. In this hour of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, American Jewry proved equal to the task. Not only were great sums of money raised, running into hundreds of millions of dollars, but men and women, specially trained for the job, volunteered to cross the ocean in person, to give loving care to this pitiful "remnant", to show them that they were not forgotten, and to nurse them back to normal living.

Essex Jewry contributed generously to the campaigns, and several of its leaders took a prominent part in the work of the JDC. A number of social workers from the county served with distinction as JDC representatives in various countries.

There are numerous other organizations rendering aid to Jews overseas. Some, like ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), have local chapters.

Making a dream come true

Ever since the expulsion from "Erets Yisrael" (אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל) by the Romans in the year 70 C.E., the prayer for "the return to Zion" (שִׁבַת צִיּוֹן , Shivat Tsiyon) was constantly on the lips of Jews, and the dream was deep in their hearts. Shocked into action by the events of the day, Theodor Herzl, in 1897, convened in Basle, Switzerland, a congress of representatives of Jewish groups from all over the world, to discuss the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland. The Zionist movement, founded at that assembly, spread to every country where Jews lived.

Essex Jewry, like Jews in other communities, had entertained emissaries (מְשֻׁלָּחִים , meshulahim) from Erets Yisrael for many years. They came to collect donations for the upkeep of the "yeshivot" (יְשִׁיבוֹת , talmudic academies) and for the support of the aged people who had

gone to spend the remaining days of their life in the Holy Land. Those who remember those days recall that the "meshulahim" never left the community on the Passaic empty-handed.

Herzl's call to world Jewry found an echo in Newark. A group of men and women, mostly recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, banded themselves into a society bearing the proud name of "Bnai Uvnot Tsiyon" (בְּנֵי וּבְנוֹת צִיּוֹן, Sons and Daughters of Zion). After the Kishinev pogroms, the Zionist movement gained new adherents, especially among English speaking Jews, who formed the Herzl Zionist Society, and later still, the Brandeis Zionist Society. The latter was named in honor of Louis D. Brandeis, the Boston lawyer who became the leader of American Zionism, and who was later to become one of the greatest justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. These groups usually met in the vestry rooms of Oheb Shalom.

In 1905, Newark's Zionists sent Leon A. Kohn and Sarah Kussy as their delegates to the national convention of the Federation of American Zionists held in Tannersville, N.Y. Rabbi Julius Silberfeld, of Temple B'nai Abraham, was the first president of the Newark Zionist District, organized a few years later.

The young people, too, came under the spell of Zionism, and the first youth club came into being in 1913 and was known as "Hatehiya" (הַתְּחִיָּה , Rebirth). Among the members of this group were many young people who today are leaders in the Jewish community.

When National Young Judaea was organized in 1909, a number of Newark youth clubs, such as "Ohavey Tsiyon" (אוֹהֲבֵי צִיּוֹן , Lovers of Zion) and "Tikvat Tsiyon" (תִּקְוַת צִיּוֹן , Hope of Zion), joined the movement.

In no other Jewish communal endeavor have women played as inportant a part as in the rebuilding of Erets Yisrael. It all began with a meeting of women held in New York on Purim 1912. At this meeting Henrietta Szold, the daughter of a Baltimore rabbi, destined to become one of the greatest women in Jewish history, founded "Hadassah", the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Among those present was a Newark public school teacher, Sarah Kussy. It was she who, two years later, gathered a group of 27 women at her home, at 294 Springfield Avenue, and there the first Newark Hadassah chapter was formed. Miss Szold paid a visit to Newark and addressed the group. From this small beginning the chapter grew to a membership of 5,000.

As in other American communities, the Zionist

movement spread in the county and new groups were formed. The "Poaley Tsiyon" (פּוֹעֲלֵי צִיּוֹן), or Labor Zionists, organized a chapter under the leadership of men like Dr. Jacob Polevsky. The women formed a local branch of the "Pioneer Women". The religious Zionists joined the "Mizrahi" (מִזְרָחִי) movement. The fraternal order of "B'nai Zion" (בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן), or Sons of Zion, established a branch which attracted many members. Two Newarkers achieved the office of Grand Master, or Nassi (נָשִׂיא): Joseph Kraemer and Harry A. Pine, who is currently serving as the Chief Magistrate of Newark.

More Zionist youth groups were formed, which were affiliated with national organizations. They include "Junior Hadassah", the young women's organization which maintains Meier Shfeya, the children's village in Israel; two Labor Zionist groups – "Habonim" (הַבּוֹנִים , the Builders) and "Hashomer Ha-tsa-ir" (הַשּׁוֹמֵר הַצָּעִיר, the Young Guard); "B'nai Akiva" (בְּנֵי עֲקִיבָא , Sons of Akiva) a religious Zionist group, and others.

Many of these organizations raised funds for various projects in the upbuilding of Erets Yisrael. One of the most tireless workers in this cause was Michael A. Hollander. The most popular, perhaps, of all these projects has been the "Keren Kayemet Le-Yisrael" (קֶרֶן קַיֶּמֶת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) or the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the purpose of which is to redeem the soil of the homeland as the property of the entire Jewish People, and to plant trees on its barren hills. Thanks to the efforts of men like Israel Cohn, the blue JNF box was to be found in nearly every Jewish home. Over 200 thousand trees have been planted by Essex Jewry, and include the New Jersey Forest of Freedom located in the Plain of Sharon.

The establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, filled every Jew with a sense of joy and pride. Essex Jewry was inspired to a new generosity, in order to help the young state to overcome the many obstacles still in its way. Those, in particular, who had been active in the Zionist movement, saw a dream come true. The community has demonstrated this concern not only by outright contributions to the UJA but also by investing a total of four million dollars in Government of Israel Bonds.

A number of Essex Jews have shown their devotion to the Zionist cause in different ways. The brothers Samuel and Philip Friedlander, of Orange, and Aaron Herr of Newark were among the earliest Zionists in the community. In 1917, these three, among others, enlisted in the Jewish



JACK ROTHMAN
(1911-1948)
in the uniform of a U.S. Merchant Marine ensign, during World War II.

(In translation)

Israel's Army of Defense
salutes the memory of
YAAKOV ROTHMAN
of blessed memory
who fell at his post.
Honor unto the Defenders
of the Homeland!



OBITUARY POSTER IN ISRAEL

Legion which was formed by the British to help liberate Palestine from Turkish rule. The Friedlander brothers and Herr later settled in Erets Yisrael. Others have made their homes there, too.

During the Israel War of Independence, when the young state was fighting for its life against the invading armies of six Arab nations, young Jews, and non-Jews also, from every corner of the earth, rushed as volunteers to the aid of the embattled nation. Among them were a number of young Jews from Essex County who, in true American tradition, risked their lives in the cause of liberty. One of them, Jack Rothman, from Maplewood, a merchant marine officer, was killed on December 31, 1948.

In the six years since the establishment of the state, hundreds of Essex Jews have visited Israel. Among them were a number of young people whose trip was made possible through financial grants by Zionist and educational organizations. Such visits help to build a bridge of understanding between Essex Jewry and the Jewish community in the State of Israel.

One community

The good work carried on by the various organizations required money. In the early days, funds were raised mainly through membership dues and by special "functions." They held balls, picnics, entertainments, theater parties, minstrel shows, raffles, bazaars, tag days. Sometimes appeals were conducted during synagogue services, particularly at the Yom Kippur "Kol Nidrei" service. Some institutions placed in the homes "tsedaka" boxes, or "pushkes", into which pennies would be dropped before candlelighting on Friday and at other times. There was also direct solicitation of donations, from door to door, or by mail.

As the organizations increased, the people were solicited for contributions by a growing number of groups. The contributors, as well as the leaders, soon recognized that in many instances there was duplication, waste and competition among the organizations. As a result, there began a movement to set up a central agency which would raise the needed funds through one campaign each year and then allocate the money among the organizations. This agency would also try to do away with the duplication that marked the activities of many of them.

As early as 1902, an unsuccessful attempt was made to form a "United Hebrew Charities of Newark". Another

attempt, in 1910, also failed. It was not until a decade later, in 1922, that the first central community organization was formed. It was known as the Conference of Jewish Charities, but its scope was limited to the agencies receiving aid from the Newark Welfare Federation.

The Welfare Federation was the non-sectarian "Community Chest", which subsidized local Protestant, Catholic and Jewish charities. It provided money only for the local charitable and recreational agencies, and the function of the Conference of Jewish Charities was to supervise and coordinate the work of the Jewish agencies.

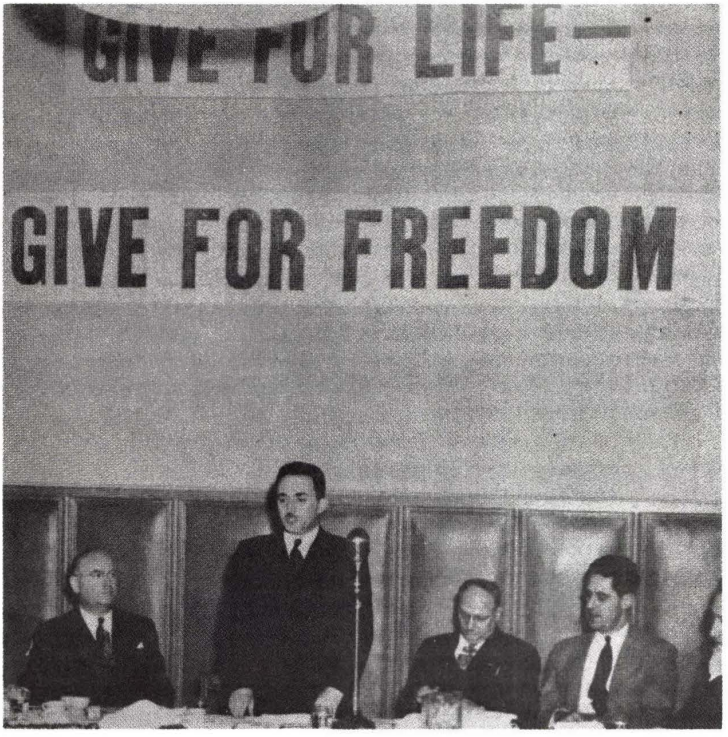
Not included in this plan were the religious and educational institutions and the organizations which were concerned with rendering help to Jews abroad. The United Palestine Appeal, the Joint Distribution Committee, HIAS, ORT and others conducted their own fund raising activities. To meet this need, the Conference in 1936 launched the United Jewish Appeal (UJA). Later, the national UJA borrowed its name from the Essex county agency.

In 1940, the name of the Conference was changed to the Essex County Council of Jewish Agencies. The Council, operating on a county-wide basis, was intended to serve not only the local charities but also the local cultural and educational agencies, as well the national organizations. Established on democratic principles, the Council provided a common meeting ground for all segments of the community, all of whom had a voice in the management of its affairs.

In 1944, after a careful survey made by experts in community problems, the Council was reorganized as the Jewish Community Council of Essex County (JCC). This was the final step which brought order and unity to one of the largest centers of Jewish life in America.

Since the beginning of the dispersion, Jews by and large lived in communities, which were more or less self-governing. These "Kahals" (קָהָל) collected taxes to support their synagogues, schools, "tsedaka" and other institutions, including their own courts. This system continued unchanged until the Emancipation in the 18th and 19th centuries, when Jews in Western Europe and in America became citizens on a par with the non-Jews and no longer depended on their Jewish communities for the various social and educational services. Membership in the Jewish community became voluntary. The Jewish community could no longer depend on taxes but on free-will offerings or self-taxation of those individuals who desired to maintain Jewish community life.

It is not easy to build a community which depends on



MOSHE SHARETT, FOREIGN MINISTER OF ISRAEL,
addressing Essex County UJA dinner in 1948.

the goodwill of its members; yet this is what the Jews in Essex County have done, as have other Jews throughout America, with a considerable degree of success. It was accomplished, in no small measure, by a group of able and selfless leaders who, over the years, have gained the confidence of the community. Heading this list are Michael A. Stavitsky, Julius H. Cohn, Samuel I. Kessler, Daniel Shiman, Herbert R. Abeles and Alan V. Lowenstein, all of whom served, in succession, as presidents of the community. The present head of the Council is Louis Stern.

The Jewish Community Council attempts to provide for the total needs of the community — relief, guidance, education, recreation and health. It coordinates and guides the work of the agencies affiliated with it, and plans for their future. The Council sponsors the Community Relations Committee which maintains contact with non-Jewish organizations. It also publishes the weekly "Jewish News" as the organ of the Jewish community. The Council as we have seen, supports not only local needs but also contributes to a large number of national institutions.

The money required for this vast program is provided through the Council's fund-raising arm, the United Jewish Appeal, which conducts a campaign once a year. More than 30 thousand contributions are collected annually, through the solicitation of a corps of dedicated volunteers numbering some 3,500 men, women and young people. Since its inception in 1936, the UJA of Essex County has raised a total of 25 million dollars. In one year alone, in 1948, the community contributed the generous sum of over 3 1/2 million dollars.

It is well to remember that, in addition to the funds raised by the UJA for its beneficiary agencies, synagogues, schools, and other institutions and organizations - of which there are more than 400 - continue to meet their own budgets from other sources. These budgets run well into millions of dollars annually.

Chapter Seven

WE SERVE OUR COUNTRY

In a way, when we work to promote the welfare of the Jewish community – organizing social services, spreading Jewish learning, fighting racial and religious discrimination – we are at the same time serving the best interests of the larger community. It is this thought that is pointed up in the statement of Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis that "to be good Americans we must be better Jews."

In addition, however, individual Jews, as well as entire Jewish communities, have always taken their responsibilities as citizens very much to heart, and have given devoted service in war and peace. In this, they were mindful of the words of the prophet Jeremiah (29:7) who, 2,500 years ago, exhorted his people to "seek the peace of the city" in the land where they lived, and to "pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

It was in this spirit that Asser Levy, of New Amsterdam, reported for service with the Burgher Guard to defend the settlement against the Indians. Governor Stuyvesant and his Council ruled that a Jew had no place in the militia. But Asser Levy was not one to give in meekly where his rights and duties were concerned. He waged a fight for the right to do his military duty, and he won.

When the first Jews settled in Newark, the principle of equal rights for all Americans had been well established. In the new nation, President Washington wrote to the Jewish congregation of Newport, "all possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship."

We serve in war

In the wars of the United States, Essex Jews, like all American Jews, have fought side by side with their fellow citizens. They have served in all the branches of the armed forces, earning honors and promotions, suffering wounds and giving their very lives.

Our records tell us little of the men from Essex who must have been among the 277 New Jersey Jews who served in the Civil War in the Union armies. Oddly, we do know of a brother of William S. Rich, so prominent in the affairs of B'nai Abraham, who fought on the Confederate side and fell in the battle of Chancellorsville. Another brother served in the Union forces.

In the First World War (1917-18), the number of Jewish servicemen from New Jersey rose to over 5,000. In this war, three Jews were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. One of them was Sgt. William Sawelson, from Harrison, born in Newark and educated in the public schools of East Newark and the Kearny High School. He was killed at Grand-Pre, France, at the age of 23, while trying to bring help to a wounded buddy through heavy machine-gun fire.

Two infantrymen from Newark, Private Isaac Goldstein and Private First Class Sam Bloomberg, received the Distinguished Service Cross "for extraordinary heroism in action". Essex men earned many other awards.

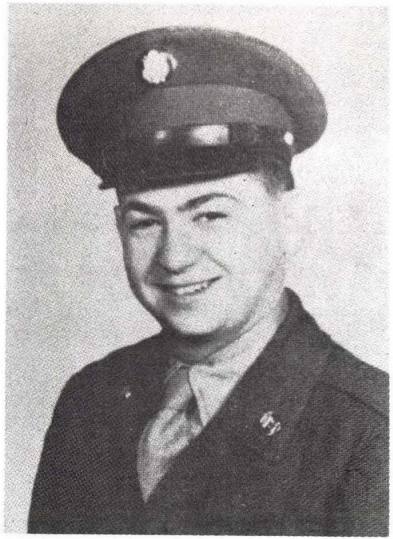
The Newark post of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States was formed in 1931.

World War II (1939-45)

Some 8,500 Jewish men and women from Essex County were in uniform in the Second World War. They were to be found in all branches of the armed forces — the infantry, the engineers, the medical corps, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines, and the Chaplains' Corps. They served on all the fighting fronts, from the frozen Aleutians to the African deserts and the sweating jungle islands of the Pacific. As many as 845 of them received awards and citations, and 164 of the awards were posthumous – awards to those killed in action.

Private First Class Louis Schleifer, age 21, was the first Newark casualty. He was killed December 7, 1941, while trying to shoot down one of the Japanese planes attacking Pearl Harbor. The city dedicated the Schleifer Memorial Park on Elizabeth Avenue in his memory.

Many pages could be filled with stories of the bravery and heroism of these Essex men: Lieutenant Sol Bauer, of the Field Artillery, himself under heavy fire in an exposed post, breaking up a large force of German paratroops (he was later killed in action); Lieutenant Pincus Taback, flying his fiftieth mission as flight leader during the invasion of Sicily; Chief Commissary Steward, Sam Gerstl, voluntarily joining repair parties in the crippled aircraft carrier "Enterprise", damaged in action off the Solomon Islands; the young doctor, Captain Harrison Hines, saving a life in the jungles of New Georgia Island, with the Japs just 500 yards away; or Captain Leo Nathans, piloting his crippled B-29 on a successful bombing run over Tokyo and flying it back home, 1,500 miles, on three engines.



AARON TEGAY
(1932-1950)



JOSHUA KUSSY KOHN
(1929-1952)



NEWARK CITY CHARTER COMMISSION, 1953

Chairman Alan V. Lowenstein and his fellow commissioners receive news of the Charter's approval by the voters.

Two Jewish boys lost their lives in the Korean War: Aaron Tegay, from Newark, fell on September 16, 1950, and two years later, Private First Class Joshua K. Kohn, also from Newark, was killed in action on September 14, 1952.

We serve in peace

In a democracy, it is not enough that we have certain rights; it is our duty to exercise those rights for the good of our community. In Essex County, Jews have from the start taken an active part in the government as well as in the civic life of the community. Many have made important contributions to the welfare of their fellow citizens, some attaining high office and recognition.

As early as 1860, Bernard Hauser was elected Commissioner of Appeals in the Sixth Ward of Newark.

In 1889, Leonard Kalisch was elected to the State Assembly, the first Newark Jew to hold this post. Max Sollinger followed him in 1890. Several other Jews served in the State legislature, and in 1916 Edward Schoen became Speaker of the Assembly.

In 1951, Assemblyman Saul G. Schulter, from Kearny, sponsored a bill to permit Jewish pupils in public schools to absent themselves from classes on Jewish holidays without having this absence noted on their school record transcripts.

Samuel I. Kessler served as county chairman of the Democratic Party from 1923 to 1928.

In 1904, Isaac Shoenthal was elected mayor of Orange, and William Hauser was mayor of Bloomfield from 1911 to 1914. Meyer C. Ellenstein served as mayor of Newark during 1933-41.

In 1905, Charles Loebel was elected to the County Board of Freeholders, and Philip Lindeman was a member of this body from 1918, becoming its director in 1925. Jews have served on the various municipal councils in the county, as councilmen, commissioners and aldermen.

In 1904, Louis V. Aronson was appointed Newark's first public playground commissioner. Samuel Roessler, served as president of the Newark Board of Education in 1936-38. Other Jews have served on this Board and on the Boards of Education of the other municipalities in the county.

In 1953 the City of Newark elected a Charter Commission for the purpose of changing the form of the city's government. Alan V. Lowenstein, former president of the Jewish Community Council, headed the Commission. Three Jews are currently serving on the City Council.

Judges and lawyers

In 1911, the first Jew was appointed Justice of the State Supreme Court. He was Samuel Kalisch, son of Dr. Isidor Kalisch, former rabbi of Temple B'nai Abraham. The appointment was made by Governor Woodrow Wilson who later, as President, nominated Louis D. Brandeis to the U.S. Supreme Court. Like Brandeis, Justice Kalisch had been the lawyer of "the little man", declining lucrative retainers offered by corporations. Justice Kalisch served until his death in 1930.

In 1952 another Jew from Essex County, Nathan L. Jacobs, was appointed to the highest tribunal in the State by Governor Alfred E. Driscoll.

There have been Jewish judges on the Superior Court and on the federal and municipal courts. Louis Hood was the first Jew to be appointed County Prosecutor, in 1913. Jacob L. Newman, a grandson of Abraham Newman, held this office in 1916.

In 1941, Joseph Kraemer was appointed Assistant Attorney General of the United States.

Many distinguished lawyers became leaders of the State bar. In 1909, Samuel Kalisch was president of the State Bar Association; in 1941, Milton M. Unger was elected to the same office.

Physicians

Jews have been very active in all branches of medical science. Beth Israel Hospital has benefited the entire community, without distinction of religion or color. It was a group of Jewish physicians who, in 1912, with the support of a few friends, established the Newark Maternity Hospital, a pioneer in the movement to reduce the death rate among babies. In recent years, the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, in West Orange, founded by Dr. Henry H. Kessler, has gained worldwide fame. The Institute has led in developing new techniques for restoring the full use of their bodies to the crippled and the handicapped.

Teachers and Writers

Devotion to education and cultural interests has ever marked the life of the Jew. No sooner had the immigrant Jew gained a foothold in the community than he turned to these favorite fields — study and teaching. A woman, Mollie Grass,



JUSTICE SAMUEL KALISCH



DR. MAX DANZIS

was the first Jewish teacher in the Newark public schools. She began teaching as early as the 1880s.

It is natural that Jews should be found in considerable numbers in the schools of the community, from the nursery schools and kindergartens up through the high schools and colleges. They serve both as teachers and administrators, and some have been active in worthwhile communal activities outside the classroom. William Wiener was principal of Central High School from 1912 to 1938; he was also Newark's first weatherman. Max J. Herzberg, for many years principal of Weequahic High School, has been literary editor of the "Newark Evening News" since 1913. Mr. Herzberg is the author of many anthologies and English textbooks.

Jews serve, likewise, on the faculties of Rutgers University and of the other colleges located in the area, as well as in universities in nearby New York City.

When Newark University was established in 1936, Rabbi Solomon Foster, Aaron Lasser and Milton M. Unger were among its co-founders. Later, Newark University became part of Rutgers, the New Jersey State University.

A number of well-known writers and poets have been residents of the community for various periods of time, and several were natives. Nathan Kussy, lawyer and son of Gustav Kussy who came to Newark in 1857, is the author of several plays and novels. Louis Ginsberg, a high school teacher, wrote poetry, his work receiving high praise from the critics.

Ilo Orleans, another lawyer, and son of the late Rabbi Orliansky of Adas Israel, has specialized in children's poetry. In 1953, there appeared THE FIRST RAINBOW, a book of his delightful poems for Jewish children.

Essex Jews have also made a contribution in the world of music and the theater. Jerome Kern, one of America's great song writers and composer of "Ol' Man River", while not a native of Newark, lived here for ten years and graduated in 1902 from Barringer High School. The theatrical producers Jed Harris and Herman Shumlin were born in Newark.

Moss Hart, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of successful Broadway "hits", received his early training as a member of the Newark YMHA's "Y Players", as did Dore Schary, a leader in the movie industry in Hollywood. Another Newarker is Marion Parsonnet, movie writer and director.

In the professions

Jews have readily taken to professions which require many years of college training. Jewish tradition favors study, and Jewish parents in modest circumstances, or even those less well-to-do, worked hard, skimped and saved to afford their children a higher education. These qualities – of hard work, sacrifice and thrift – were richly rewarded in a land that holds the door of opportunity open to all, Gentile and Jew alike. And so the children or grandchildren of the immigrant peddler or butcher or old-clothesman or laborer, may now be found among the community's doctors, dentists, pharmacists, architects, lawyers, accountants and engineers.

In business

Essex County has grown and prospered in the last hundred years. The Jewish immigrants and their descendants played their part in this growth and have shared in the prosperity. They have been active in the industrial development of the area. Many Jews have gained prominence in the manufacture of metal, leather, electrical and chemical products. Louis V. Aronson, inventor of the Ronson Lighter and many other important items, established the biggest concern of its kind in the world. Banking and real estate, motion picture, radio and television, paints and printing, fuel and food supplies, jewelry and furniture, wearing apparel and tailoring, automobiles and trucking, building and advertising, and many other branches of commerce have attracted Jews, some of whom pioneered in their fields. Louis Bamberger and Felix Fuld established in 1892 L. Bamberger & Co., one of the country's largest department stores, giving employment to many thousands of people. Meyer Kussy was founder, in 1902, and later president of the West Side Trust Company, an institution that helped the city in many of its financial problems. Louis Schlesinger organized the Newark Real Estate Board.

Building a better community

The job of making a living, whether in business, in factory, or in a profession – no matter how much time and energy it may take – does not relieve anyone from doing his job as a citizen. To be civic-minded means to be concerned with the welfare and the future of the community, and in a democracy this is everybody's business.

The contributor of money and the communal worker together build a better community. In both roles Jews have been active in the general community no less than among themselves. Along with their fellow citizens of other faiths, they have contributed generously to the appeals of national organizations, such as the Red Cross, USO and March of Dimes, as well as to campaigns of local agencies. They have served on boards and committees, and as solicitors and "doorbell pushers" in fund-raising drives. Their interest has not been limited to non-sectarian agencies alone. In 1923, for example, Louis Aronson headed the Salvation Army drive.

Two Jewish citizens outstanding for their civic and philanthropic activities were Louis Bamberger and Felix Fuld. In 1923-24, Bamberger donated nearly $800,000 for the erection of the Newark Museum. Together with Felix Fuld, he sparked the campaigns for the Beth Israel Hospital, the YM & YWHA and the Newark Community Chest. Fuld pledged one fourth of the goal of one million dollars for the Hospital drive, to which he later added $250,000 more. It is estimated that Fuld distributed about two and one half million dollars during his lifetime, much of it given anonymously.

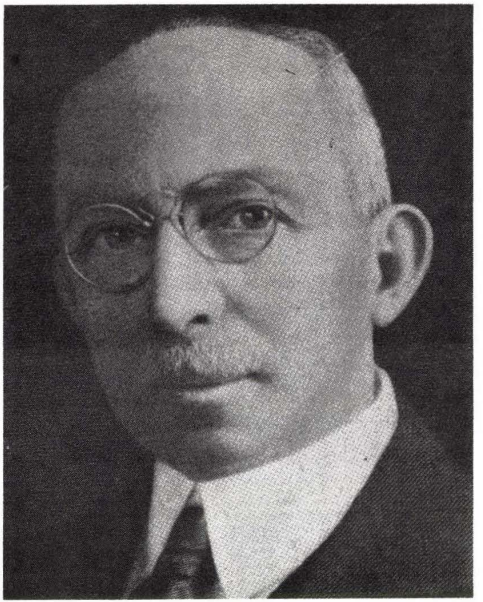
In 1930, Bamberger and his sister, the widow of Felix Fuld, gave five million dollars for the establishment of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. Albert Einstein, then a refugee from Nazi Germany, was among the first to join the staff of the Institute.

Jews took a leading part in the organization of many of the charitable and social welfare agencies in the community. One such institution was the "Newark Day Nursery and Neighborhood House", a pioneer in its field, established as early as 1906. Although founded by the "Jewish Sisterhood of Newark", a group of Temple B'nai Jeshurun women, the Day Nursery was non-sectarian from the start.

A prominent part was played by Jews in the formation of the Welfare Council which comprises all the social agencies in the community, and of the Welfare Federation which supports them through an annual campaign. The Welfare Federation also provides a partial subsidy to some of the Jewish Agencies, among them the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Family Association and the Jewish Child Care Association. Michael Stavitsky served as president of the Welfare Council in 1938-40. It may have been a coincidence that in 1954, the year of the Tercentenary, the president of the Council, Alan V. Lowenstein, and the chairman



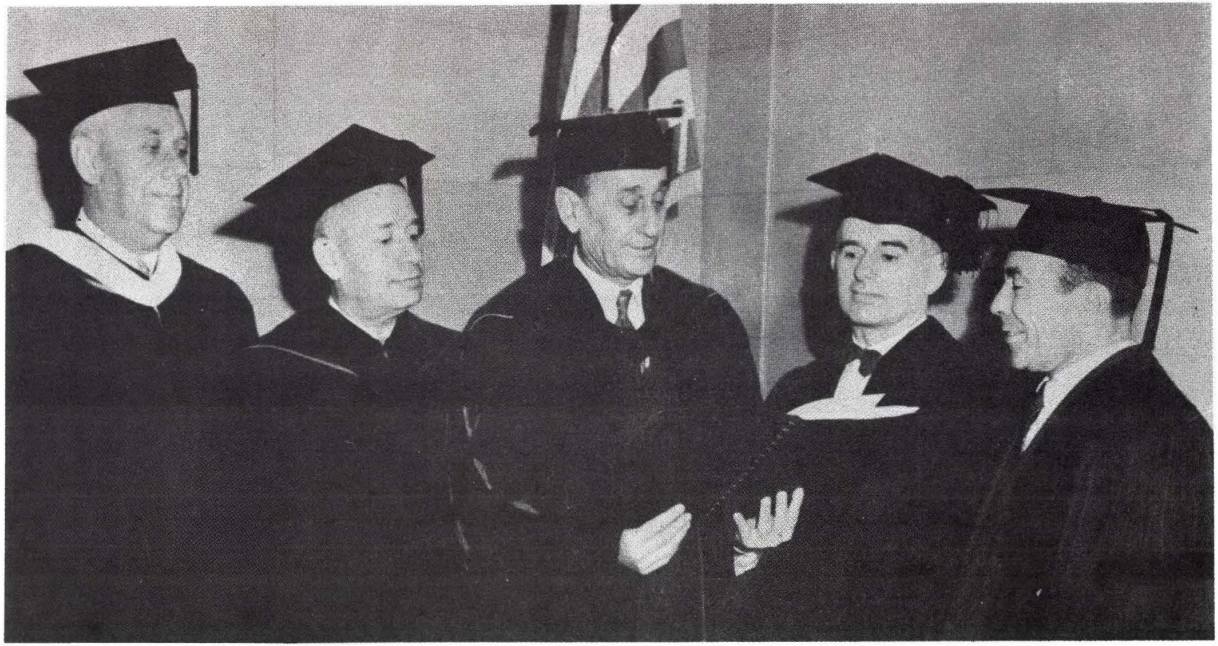
FELIX FULD



LOUIS BAMBERGER

of the campaign, A. H. Puder, were both Jews.

On November 7, 1954, Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey, conducted a special convocation "in recognition of the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Introduction of Jewish Culture into North America." On that occasion, two sons of Newark were awarded honorary Doctor's degrees. One of the recipients was Michael A. Stavitsky, civic leader and former president of the American Association for Jewish Education. The other was Professor Milton R. Konvitz, of Cornell University, a son of Newark's late Rabbi Joseph Konvitz.



RUTGERS TERCENTENARY CONVOCATION

University president, Lewis Webster Jones (center), reading the citations. Left to right: Henry S. Puder and Aaron Lasser, who received University Awards; Dr. Milton R. Konvitz and Michael A. Stavitsky, who were awarded Honorary Degrees.

CONCLUSION

THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS

The record of the first three hundred years of Jewish achievement in this country rightfully fills us with pride. Will our children and grandchildren be equally proud of our accomplishments during the next hundred years, when in the year 5815 (2054-55) they will be observing another birthday — the four hundredth anniversary of American Jewry?

Few of us, if any, will be around then. Like our ancestors before us, we will have become names belonging to the past. Will ours be cherished names? Will they be like the names mentioned in this story and those many many others, equally deserving of our thanks and admiration, not mentioned? What kind of story will they tell?

What we do, today and everyday, makes history. But history goes on, whether we are builders or wreckers, givers or parasites. It makes a difference, too, if we know what it is we want to build and how our ancestors, for a hundred generations, have gone about building a Jewish community.

In the talmudic tale of Honi the Circle-drawer, the old man enjoyed eating the fruit from a tree planted by his grandfather seventy years earlier. We, too, have found here a community, a good and pleasant place, which was not of our own making. Not so long ago, there was very little here and, but for the selfless labors of the handful of pioneers, there would be very little here still. Now that we are so many more in numbers, and so much better off in material resources, how infinitely more can we do?

Our leaders have been builders, men blessed with vision and foresight. They created communal institutions and agencies of every description, and are prepared to establish others to meet fresh needs as they arise. Gone, too are the prejudices of earlier years, the distrust and wrangling between German and East European Jews, between early settlers and newcomers, between Orthodox and Reform Jews, between Zionists and anti-Zionists, between Yiddishists and Hebraists. Cooperation has replaced conflict, and differences of opinion receive a respectful hearing. The Jewish Community Council, the product of many years of working together among all elements of the community, provides the machinery for a united effort. Now that we can work in harmony, how much better will we build?

Throughout the years of struggle in our new home, we have maintained a brotherly relation with all sections of the Jewish People and never turned a deaf ear to their appeals. We remembered that the wheel of history goes round and round. We have prospered, while they have become impoverished. Our numbers have grown, while theirs have been cruelly cut down. When we were on the receiving end, they gave us our teachers and our scholars. Now that the wheel has turned and the privilege of giving is ours, will we produce the leadership that they and we need?

The State of Israel is a reality for us, and a source of inspiration in all our efforts. To those who preceded us, it was only a prayer and a dream, and later a cause for which they worked with great zeal. American Jewry has written a glorious page in the creation of the State, and a line or two on that page belong to Essex County. Jewish values of the highest importance are being created in Israel, and some day soon "out of Zion shall come forth Torah" once more. Will we be able to receive it? How are we to build that bridge between us and Israel?

A Jewish community is judged in the end not by its numbers, nor by its wealth, nor yet by its organizational life. These are only means to an end. In the course of Jewish history, there has been many a large and wealthy community that has failed to survive and is now forgotten. On the other hand, not a few tiny communities, poor in material goods and beset by dire difficulties, had their names writ large on the pages of history and have enriched the Jewish People with imperishable treasures. What place will be assigned to Essex County?

It is well to remember that, while American Jewry is observing three hundred years of existence, the Essex community is actually little more than one hundred years old. A century is a long span of life for an individual, but a relatively short time in the life of a community. It might be said, therefore, that Essex County has now just about become Bar Mitsva. It has learned what it means to lead a Jewish life, what its duties and obligations are, and what it must do to be counted in the "minyan" of Jewish history. Will it attain a really fine manhood?

The foundation of Jewish life is Torah. But unless we are students of Torah, we cannot live by it. The study of Torah begins at an early age. We have seen that the vast majority, if not yet all, of the children in our community are receiving a Jewish education. This is a good beginning. Some continue their studies on a high school level. Few,

however, go beyond that, and those that do are compelled to travel to New York institutions of higher learning.

A dozen or so young men from Essex County have become rabbis and now serve congregations throughout the land. The community has nurtured, however, few men who devoted themselves to Jewish scholarship or teaching, although it has produced numbers of scholars in other fields. Very few, for example, of the men and women teaching today in the Jewish schools of the community are local people.

The next hundred years will decide if Essex County, now a full-grown community, is to rank with the great Jewish communities of all ages. Such a position can be achieved if the community makes an earnest effort to become a center of Jewish learning, as other American communities have already done. To do this, it must foster a general desire for study among the youth, and provide stipends and scholarships for promising youth to enable them to concentrate on their Jewish studies. It must encourage scholars, writers and artists to settle here, and must help in the publication of their works. It must establish a well-equipped Jewish library. It must build an institution of Jewish higher learning which may, in time, become the equal of the great academies in history.

Perhaps, a beginning in this direction was made on September 20, 1954, when the Board of Directors of the Jewish Education Association of Essex County voted to establish a College of Jewish Studies and instructed its officers to proceed to make it a reality as soon as possible.