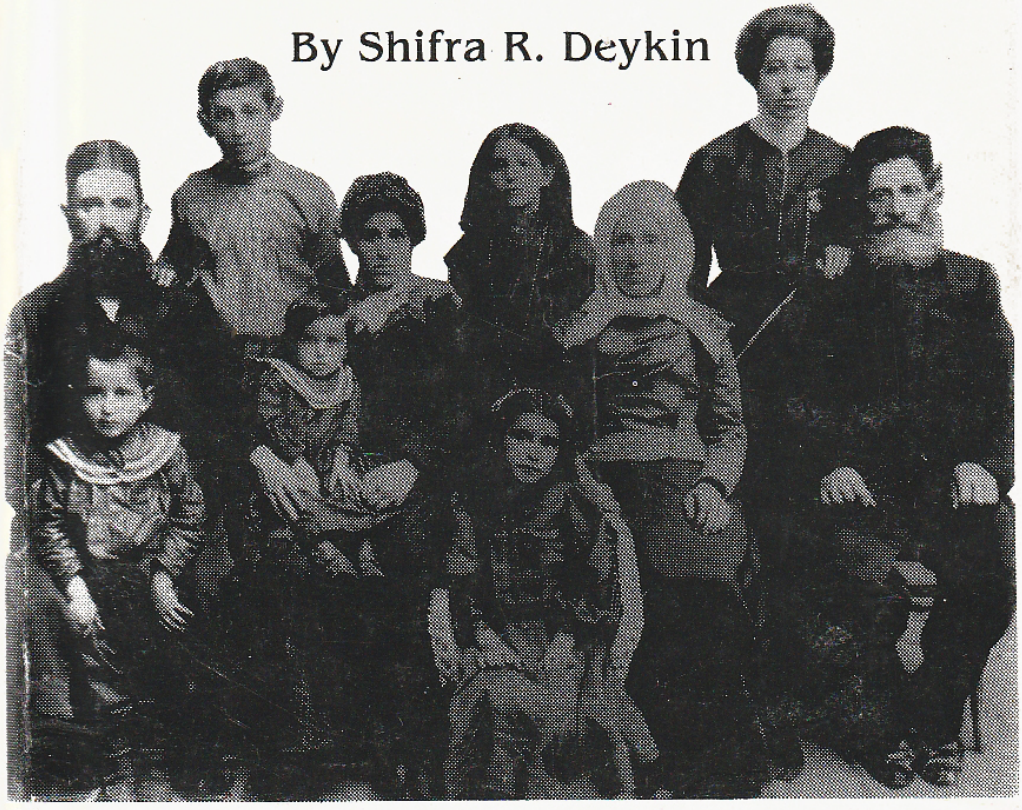
Vignettes
of Early Days in the Jewish Community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts

By Shifra R. Deykin





Shifra Rapaport Deykin, born in Palestine, came to the United States in 1923. She met Harry Deykin and they were married in 1929, eventually settling in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. She was a school teacher, he was a furniture merchant. Both were active in the Ahavath Shalom Synagogue.

Taking to heart a directive from Jewish historian Salo Baron, the author in 1983 compiled this history of the families signing the 1926 charter which established the Great Barrington Synagogue.

Cover design: Bernard A. Drew
Front cover photo: Broverman family in Russia in 1906
Back cover photo: Nager and Rapaport families in America in 1930s

Vignettes Of Early Days in the Jewish Community of Great Barrington Massachusetts

By Shifra R. Deykin



Attic Revivals Press
24 Gilmore Avenue
Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230



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Vignettes
Of Early Days
in the
Jewish Community
of Great Barrington
Massachusetts

To
Lewis and Irene
Stolzenberg
cordially
Shifra R. Deykin
Aug. 7. 1988 כ"ג אב תשמ"ח

HB. 5974

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Preface

The accurate recording of history requires attention to detail and the patience to assemble and reconstruct the many facets of a complex reality. In this set of vignettes, Shifra R. Deykin captures the structure and personalities forming one Kehillah, Great Barrington, in the Northeastern United States in the early years of the twentieth century.

The prosaic decisions of building construction, purchase of cemetery plots and hiring a rabbi take on new meaning as we see these acts through the eyes of a broad spectrum of participants. The roles of the rabbi and of committed laypeople jump out at us and we begin to understand how this small Jewish community functions.

Interactions with the non-Jewish world, provision of education for children and the transition of immigrants to upwardly mobile Americans in the Goldine Medina are all focal points of the vignettes. The founding of the synagogue serves as the central metaphor around which the rest of the community development is seen.

Let us hope that other eyewitness and painstaking accounts, like those recorded so clearly here by Mrs. Deykin, will be written down for other small communities in

the United States and Canada, and indeed for all small Jewish Kehillot around the globe. The insights found in such documents enrich us all.

Rela Geffen Monson
Professor of Sociology and
Acting Dean of Academic Affairs
Gratz College, Philadelphia
August 5, 1987 10 Av 5747



Rela Geffen Monson
(Photo by Harry Finberg
from The Berkshire Eagle
November 30, 1984)

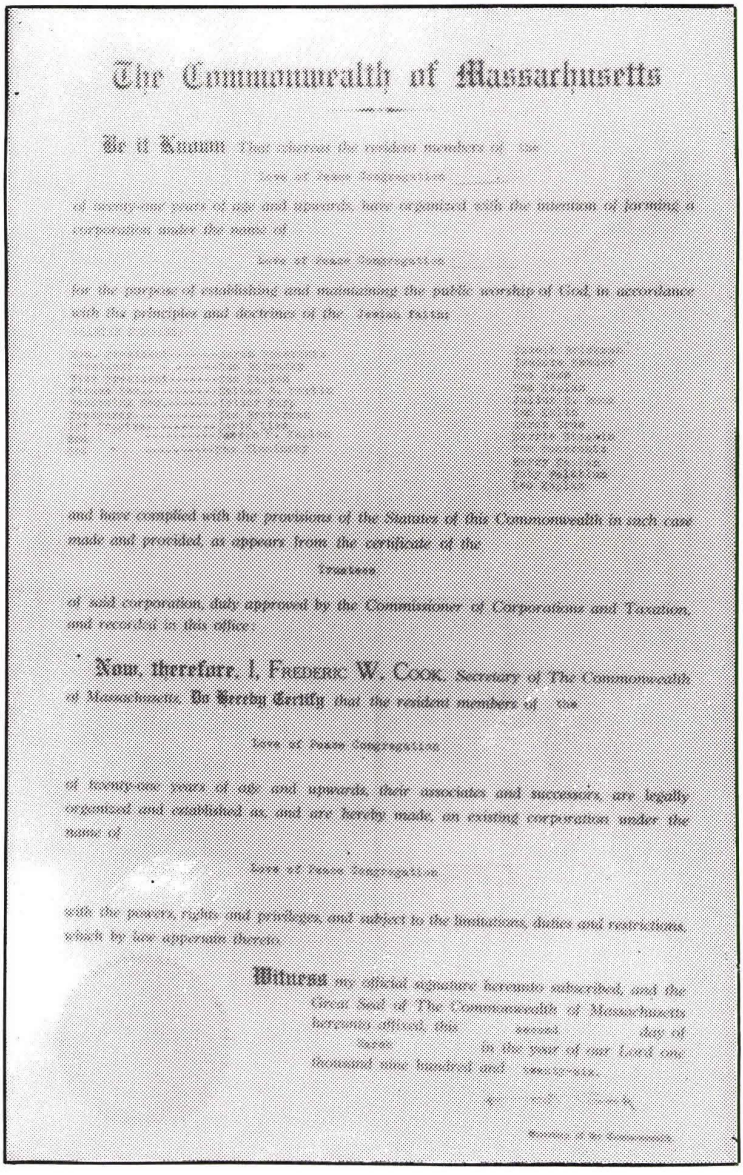
Foreword

In 1954 American Jewry celebrated three hundred years since the first Jews arrived in this country. One of the events marking this historic occasion was a convention of professional teachers and lay members of the Jewish American community, which met in New York City. As a member of the teaching staff of the Hebrew School of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, I was sent -- together with the other teachers -- to the convention. There were discussions and lectures in Hebrew, in Yiddish, and in English, and the lively sessions went on for three full days.

One lecture to the group stands out in my memory. It was delivered by Professor Salo Baron, the foremost historian of the United States Jews. Professor Baron told us, as I recall, "I am glad to find out that so many people here come from small towns. I implore you to keep records of what happens in your communities, for each one of you, in your individual experience, may provide a model of many others in this country; your records may lay the basis for American Jewish History." His speech was impressive, and his exhortation important.

My recollection of these words encourages me today to believe that this set of vignettes may bring similar stories of the past to the minds of the readers of this collection.

-- Shifra Deykin



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Be it Known That whereas the resident members of the

Love of Peace Congregation

of twenty-one years of age and upwards, have organized with the intention of forming a corporation under the name of

Love of Peace Congregation

for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the public worship of God, in accordance with the principles and doctrines of the Jewish Faith;

and have complied with the provisions of the Statutes of this Commonwealth in such case made and provided, as appears from the certificate of the

Trustees

of said corporation, duly approved by the Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation, and recorded in this office:

Now, therefore, I, FREDERIC W. COOK, Secretary of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Do Hereby Certify that the resident members of the

Love of Peace Congregation

of twenty-one years of age and upwards, their associates and successors, are legally organized and established as, and are hereby made, an existing corporation under the name of

Love of Peace Congregation

with the powers, rights and privileges, and subject to the limitations, duties and restrictions, which by law appertain thereto.

Witness my official signature hereunto subscribed, and the Great Seal of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts hereunto affixed, this second day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty-six.

Secretary of the Commonwealth

Charter for the Love of Peace Congregation. Note the blank slips pasted in four places over the original. Twenty-one names appear, representing eighteen original Jewish family members

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Be it known that whereas the resident members of the Love of Peace Congregation Church of twenty one years of age and upward have organized with the intention of forming a corporation under the name of Love of Peace Congregation Church for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the public worship of God, in accordance with the principles and doctrines of the Jewish faith;

CHARTER MEMBERS:

Hon. President --Aaron Pomerantz
President --Sam Rajonsky
Vice President---Sam Kaplan
Finance Sec.--Nathan B. Martin
Recording Sec.--Isidor Karp
Treasurer --Ike Broverman
1st Trustee --David Liss
2nd Trustee--Joseph M. Kaplan
3rd Trustee--Max Slaminsky

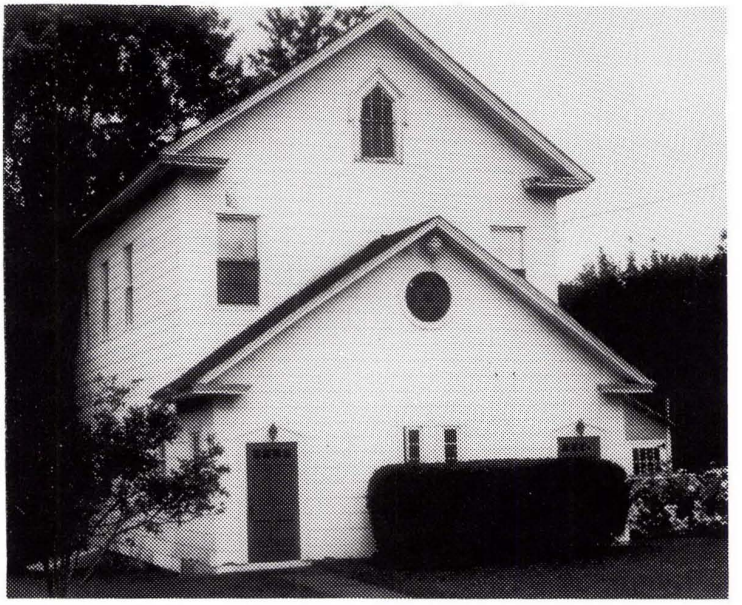
Joseph Brickman
Isadore Seader
Max Gans
Sam Kaplan
Julius E. Rams
Sam Kalin
Aaron Gruss
Morris Stoskin
Sam Pomerantz
Harry Kaplan
Ruby Feldblum
Leo Kaplan

and have complied with the provisions of the Statutes of this Commonwealth in such case made and provided, as appears from the certificate of the Trustees of said corporation, duly approved by the Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation, and recorded in this office:

Now, therefore, I, Frederick W. Cook, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby certify that the resident members of the Love of Peace Congregation Church of twenty-one years of age and upwards, their associates and successors, are legally organized and established as, and are hereby made, an existing corporation under the name of Love of Peace Congregation Church with the powers, rights and privileges, and subject to the limitations, duties and restrictions, which by law appertain thereto. Witness my official signature hereunto subscribed, and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts hereunto affixed, this second day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty-six.

F.W. Cook, Secretary of the Commonwealth

(Original text of Great Barrington charter.)



The Great Barrington Synagogue on North Street

Introduction

The early days of the Jewish community in Great Barrington date back to about 1920, when a number of families first settled here. In 1921 there were nearly fifteen Jewish families in the town, meeting for religious services in the house of one of the first members, Aaron Pomerantz. Because their numbers were growing, however, these settlers began to look for a suitable site for a synagogue. With their very first efforts a lively and characteristic tale developed.

One of the newcomers in this community was Ike Broverman, a junk peddler who joined the other settlers in their regular prayers. It so happened that Broverman kept his peddler's merchandise in a neighborhood building owned by the carpenter, Charlie Lee. Lee's building, in fact, had served originally as a public school. Broverman saw the possibility of returning the building to wider use. Offering to buy the structure, he dreamed of using it as a site for the synagogue -- a plan which his fellow congregants approved. Lee sold him the building, and in 1922 the Jews began using that location for their religious purposes. Their plans for an organized Jewish community took five years to mature; but

by 1926 they had legally established a congregation and hired a rabbi to lead them.

Early in 1926 the Great Barrington Jews engaged a lawyer, Frank Wright, to help file for a charter. The document was officially signed in Boston on March 2, 1926. The Jews of Great Barrington then gathered to mark the occasion with a festive celebration. The community would now be official, as the charter would proclaim. Their joy suddenly was marred, however, as the top line of the charter was read aloud:

"Love of Peace Congregation Church"

"We cannot call ourselves 'church'!" "This is why we fled Europe!" they cried in consternation. Again they turned to Wright for corrective action. Their lawyer worked out a pragmatic solution: the word "church" was covered with slips of paper throughout the charter. These small slips of paper, which remain to this day, serve as a historical reminder of the first aspiring Jewish settlers and their firm convictions.

As we read the names of the people listed on the charter, we may ask: Who are they? From what European countries had they fled? From what part of the United States did they come here? Why did they finally settle in Great Barrington? What did they then do for a living? Where did they eventually make their homes?

It is my hope that these vignettes will serve to answer such questions. The vignettes are presented according to a general plan: First, I have followed the order of the family

names listed in the charter of 1926; thereafter I have added names of people who came here, giving their stories in a roughly chronological order. Finally, I have considered some other figures who especially contributed to the development of the Jewish community. I have saved the story of Rabbi Jacob Axelrod for the conclusion, since it is his story, in a sense, that encompasses that of our entire community. Under his direction and with his example this small town's Jewish life gained character and unity.

I offer here my thanks to all who helped me gather the material for these vignettes.

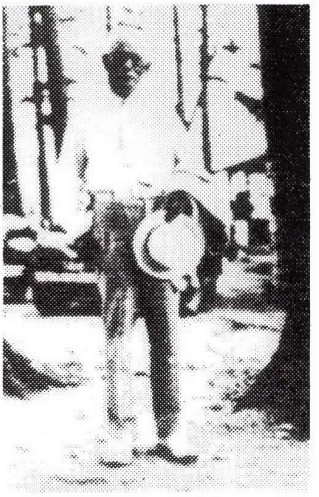
Shifra Rapaport Deykin
Great Barrington, Massachusetts
November 17, 1983 -- May 5, 1987



The First Family: A Wedding is Celebrated in the New Synagogue and the Whole Town Attends

Before the turn of the century, and up to the middle of the first decade, the town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, housed only one Jewish family. That family was headed by Aaron and Rose Pomerantz. Their daughter Sara Seader, who lives in New London, Connecticut, has many recollections of her own experiences as well as those which her mother told her many years ago.*

The family came to this country from Ukraine, Russia. There, Aaron had served in the army of the czars for eleven long years after Rose gave birth to their son, William, in 1882. During all these years, Aaron hardly ever came home. The life in the Russian army was very difficult. It usually meant servitude for many years and,



Aaron Pomerantz

at times, even twenty-five years. As a souvenir of that time, Aaron could show a sabre scar on his foot. Rose told her daughter Sara, however, that at that time Aaron looked like a real Cossack, with his black fur hat, riding a horse and sporting a sabre. His rating in the Russian army was similar to that of a lieutenant in the United States Army. During that time, Rose ran a tea shop in their city (Sara thought it was Odessa).

Three years after Aaron returned home, he and Rose decided to follow Aaron's sister, who had emigrated to America. So in 1895, Aaron and Rose took their three children (William, fourteen; Lena, three; and Edith, nine months) and came to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to Aaron's sister, Hannah Holsberg. Her husband was earning his living by peddling his wares from town to town. It was probably he who recommended that Aaron settle in Great Barrington.

Before long, Aaron found a place in Great Barrington, on North Main Street, on the western bank of the Housatonic River (there are no houses there now). After a short while, the family moved to larger quarters on East Street, near Cottage Street. Having been a furrier and a tailor specializing in men's clothing in Russia, Aaron resumed his tailoring here. His shop was located on the second floor of the Mahaiwe Bank (now First Agricultural Bank) on the corner of Main and Castle Streets.

Until 1912, the family lived on East Street. In 1896, Kate was the family's first child to be born in the United States. The others who were born in this house were Sam, 1898; Herman, 1902; Sara, 1904; and Joseph, 1905. During this period, Aaron proudly became an American citizen. He always referred to that momentous event as occuring "During the Presidency of William McKinley."

Although according to Sara's story there were no other Jewish families living in Great Barrington at the time, the household was always conducted in strict accordance with the Kosher dietary laws. Jews who chanced to pass through the town or who happened to be in town on some business would be offered a good Jewish meal in their home. The family had to go to Pittsfield for its Kosher meats and also to have its chickens and other Kosher fowl killed by the special "Shohet." Although transportation in those days was by horse and wagon (and later by the trolley cars), the Pomerantz family repeatedly made the journey in order to maintain their traditional Jewish household.

The parents insisted that the children speak to them in English, while they themselves responded in Yiddish so that this language should be kept alive and not be lost in the next generation. Sara recalled that her father was "putting on Tefillin" (phylacteries) during the early morning prayers. When Sara was a child of about eight years (about 1912), the family bought a house on State Road at the corner of North Street.

Sara said that her father must have been successful in his tailoring to have been able to buy that house. By now he had other tailors working for him. One of them was named Shapiro, a man who lived three miles to the east, on Route 23. He walked daily to the tailor shop. Aaron's wife Rose was also a great help in defraying the household expenses; she had a little grocery store built to the west of the big house on State Road. This store served as a stopping place for salesmen and for cattlemen from Springfield who would canvass the country all around, buying cattle on the hoof.

When speaking about her mother Rose, Sara added, "My mother's activities also included that of an interpreter in the court of Great Barrington. She was very fluent in the Polish and Russian languages and when there was any trouble amongst immigrants of these two countries, my mother was called in to interpret. She was also very friendly with Father Murphy, the priest of the Catholic Church at that time. Here, too, when there was any misunderstanding between Father Murphy's Polish and Russian congregants, mother was called upon as an interpreter, a go-between. She could not convince Father Murphy that she was never anything but a Jew, born, raised and died as one, because she knew so much about the Catholic religion."

Sara recalled that she enjoyed her childhood. She commented that her friends were all gentiles and, until she was thirteen, she had no Jewish friends. To this day, Sara appreciates the fact that she was brought up in a small American town, where democracy was a part of living and

not just theory. So she emphasized that she also tried to teach this to her own children -- that there should be no differences among people because of color, creed or national origin.

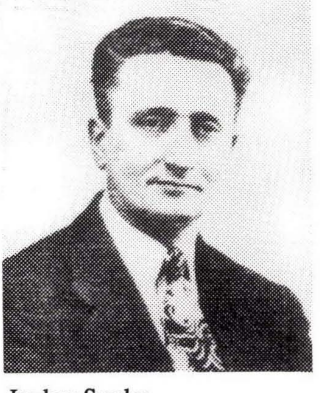
The Pomerantz children first went to Dewey School. This grammar school, now a court house, was located between Gilmore Avenue on the west and Hillside Avenue on the east, and north of Anderson Street. Then they continued on to Searles High School (now a middle school), located on Bridge Street, near the Housatonic River. For her brothers, in addition to these schools, the Pomerantzes hired a young man to teach them Hebrew reading and the religious preparation for their Bar Mitzvah. This man stayed in their home; his tuition, probably, was his room and board.

Sara here paused and recounted some unforgettable scenes which occurred in that household during the early days. In the large home on State Road, there were two living rooms. One, kept as a shul (synagogue), had an ark with a Torah in it. This room was kept locked on weekdays and was opened on the Sabbath for weekly prayer services. But especially important was the occasion when that room was used for the High Holidays. At that time, Jewish people who resided as far away as Austerlitz, New York, would come with their families, bringing with them bedding and food for the week. Wherever there was a place to put a mattress, they would stay.

"Our house had three attics," Sara continued. "We had a large barn and a hayloft. Every available spot was occupied. We had two kitchens. Every family did its own cooking. It was the highlight of my growing up!"

Around that time, the Feldblum family moved into the upstairs of the Pomerantz house. They lived there for many years. Slowly, other Jewish families moved into Great Barrington. The entire group was socially close -- like one big family.

The major religious services were still held in the Pomerantz house. However, during the years 1920 to 1922, one of the newcomers, a talented young man named Isadore Seader, took the initiative and formed a committee to search for a special building for the future synagogue. As has already been mentioned, Ike Broverman helped to find the building, the one next to the Pomerantz house on North Street where it still stands and is used as Great Barrington's Synagogue to this day. Ike Broverman and Aaron Pomerantz signed the mortgage, but there were no funds for the renovations. Again a committee was formed to raise the funds. It consisted of Pomerantz, Nate Martin, Isadore Seader and Dave Liss.



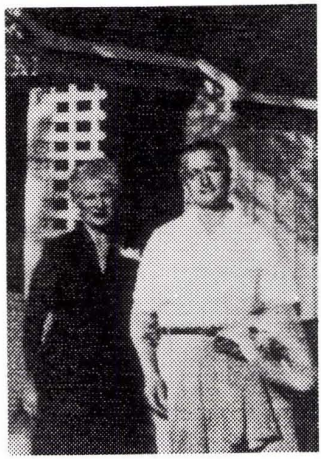
Isadore Seader

Their fund-raising methods were highly original, and even spectacular. Every Sunday these men would travel around the country, putting on home concerts of Yiddish and Hebrew songs. At one time they even went as far as New London, Connecticut. Isadore Seader was usually the soloist and was billed as the "Little Hazan," and this group attracted many appreciative audiences around the countryside. In 1922, after the renovations were completed, the local Jews were able to open the Synagogue with great joy and ceremony. Rose Pomerantz was quite sick at the time, but she was given the honor of carrying the Torah in her lap when she came in a wheelchair from her house to the Synagogue next door. Both Jews and gentiles were there to enjoy the celebrations.

"My wedding was the first in the new Synagogue, in December of 1922," Sara said. "Although we sent out about 250 invitations, these didn't mean a thing. It seems that all of Great Barrington showed up with or without invitations. It was the first Jewish wedding here, witnessed by all creeds. All notables were there -- Father Murphy, the Chief of Police Oschman, and Almon Culver, who was then the treasurer of the Mahaiwe Bank. He sang at my wedding.

"This was during the time of Prohibition and liquor was served in small soda bottles. But the food was prepared at home, with the help from Pittsfield. Everything had to be strictly Kosher.

It was Isadore Seader that I married. Three years earlier, he had come here from Springfield. While he was working for Julius Rams as a meat cutter in the store on Railroad Street, Isadore lived in our House. After the wedding, we stayed there until we moved to Winsted, Connecticut."



Sara and Isadore Seader

The story of the first Jewish family in Great Barrington ends with no members of that family living here now, although five out of its eight children were born in town.

The list of the children of Aaron and Rose Pomerantz follows, according to their ages:

William (1882) -- Married Sara Mishkin of New York City. They had seven children and, after retiring, moved to Florida.

Lena (1893) -- Unmarried. Always sickly, she spent her last twenty years peacefully in the Jewish Home for the Aged in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Edith (1895) -- Married to Nathan B. Martin, who had a meat market on Railroad Street. After they sold it to Morris Goldberg, they moved to Springfield. They had two children. When Nathan died, Edith moved to New York City and then to Florida.

Kate (1896) -- Married Julius Rams, who came from Springfield to work for Nathan Martin as a meat cutter. Later, he moved to Lee, where he opened the Lee Supermarket. After retiring, they moved to Florida.

Sam (1898) -- Listed in the original charter, was married to Lena Rifkin of New York City. As he grew older, he lost his sight and went to work in a shop for the blind there. He specialized in ceramics, and one year he made a ceramic cigarette box which was chosen to be presented to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Herman (1902) -- Married Dorothy Cusick of Pittsfield. After moving there, he went to work at the General Electric plant.

Sara (1904) -- Married Isadore Seader, who came to Great Barrington from Springfield. They moved to Winsted and opened a meat market which was successful. They had three children (a son, Leonard, who graduated from Brown University and lives in Manchester, Connecticut; and two daughters, Beverly and Rose). After a big storm which washed down the store building, they moved to Lee to be with other members of the family and then they moved to Springfield. When Isadore died, Sara and her daughter Rose moved to New London, where they have lived for the past seven years, with other daughter Beverly and David Gelfond and their two sons, Sara's grandchildren. Sara is now, as always, very busy in many social activities, both Jewish and civic. Among her many functions are the Hebrew Senior Citizens; past president of the New London Aid and

Educational Society; the board of the Jewish Center; past delegate to Washington from the General New London Senior Affairs; active member of Hadassah; life member of Eastern Star 217 in Lee; and a congregant of Beth El Synagogue.

Joseph (1905) -- Married Mary Silling of New York City, living now in Torrington, Connecticut. He owned a meat market until retiring.

After Rose Pomerantz died in the late 1920s, and all of the children had married and moved away, Aaron closed the tailor shop and moved to Lee to live with Kate and Julius Rams. He died in 1934 and was buried in Pittsfield, where his wife Rose rested.

At one time, the family as a whole had a Cousins Club. This was a means for many Jewish immigrants to keep in touch with all the members of the family. Usually, these get-togethers were held in the summer. Sara mentioned that in one of these gatherings they had as many as one hundred and twenty-two members.

---

*Paul Broverman, who is related to the Seaders through his brother's marriage, drove with the author to New London. There, Sara and her daughter served a fine lunch and then told of their many memories. This was in the middle of February, 1983.

A President is Chosen

Sam Rajonsky came to Canaan, Connecticut, early in this century. There he opened a little shoe repair shop. After marrying Lena Feldblum, he and his bride went to live in the nearby town of Great Barrington, across the Massachusetts border, since Lena had already been established there and was well-known for her expertise in fashion.

Sam, commuting daily to Canaan to his shop, found satisfaction in living in Great Barrington because there were more Jews living there, and there he could play an active role in the developing community. By the third decade of the century, when the group bought the building for the Synagogue, Sam was elected to be the president, while Aaron Pomerantz, who felt he was too old for the presidency, accepted the post of honorary president.

When his friends recounted their adventures of the Old Country, Sam too could tell his story. All knew that every Jew was in constant fear of being conscripted into the Czarist Army, since in it one would live a life of servitude for many years. Anti-semitism was an open attitude from the upper echelon as well as from the other soldiers of their own level. Thus a Jew could be justified completely for the

feeling of "Why should I sacrifice my whole life" for no gain to himself physically nor any rewarding patriotic sentiment. Sometimes, however, there were reasons which would permit one to be released form conscription. But Sam could not claim any. So it was that once, while he was led by a group of soldiers in the fields, Sam disappeared into the high grass and then into the woods where his pursuers could not find him.

During his wanderings in Europe, Sam suffered from the cold weather and lack of food and lodging; but he managed to cross the Russian border, and finally he reached a coastal city where he joined a larger group of emigrants. There he boarded the big boats for America and never regretted his move.

In Great Barrington, Sam and Lena lived across the street from the Synagogue. Later when the congregation was established, they were happy to be able, for a brief period, to offer accommodations in their home to the newly chosen Rabbi.

Many years thereafter (about 1945), when Sam and Lena decided to retire, they moved back to New York City. Sam and Lena had no children.

A Father and Three Sons Sign the Charter

Sam (Shlomo) Kaplan and his wife Tillie (Teible) (Moskowitz) came from Russia, from the Minsk and Shlutzk areas. They arrived at New York City in the early part of this century. From there they settled in Sandisfield, Massachusetts. Seven of their children had been born in Russia, but their youngest, Leo (Leible), was born in Sandisfield in 1908, as is evident from that town hall's records. When Leo was still a young child, the family bought a farm in neighboring New Marlborough, on the border of Great Barrington. Here Sam became a cattle dealer and his son Leo recalled that at an early age he, too, enjoyed selling calves. Leo added that he stopped school after the fifth grade in order to pursue his interests in cattle dealing, and had continued, successfully, ever since.

When Sam and Tillie moved to this area, they began to associate with the Jewish families that had already moved to Great Barrington. By the time the group was ready to own a synagogue building -- in the early 1920s -- Sam and Tillie joined the local Jewish community. The Kaplans, from the first, were generous with their gifts to the Synagogue as well as instrumental in bringing other Jews to the town. Tillie

Kaplan was particularly active in the welfare of her fellow Jewish settlers.

In 1926, when the Jewish community in Great Barrington received its charter from Boston, Sam Kaplan made sure that the names of his three sons who were still residing in the area were also listed on the charter. Sam was then the vice president; his son Joseph was the second trustee. Henry was one of the signers, and even Leo's name was on, although Leo had not yet reached the required age of twenty-one; he was only eighteen years old!

Shortly after the charter was signed, Sam fell ill and was hospitalized at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington. He died here and was buried in the orthodox cemetery in Pittsfield. A few years later Tillie Kaplan also passed away and was buried near Sam in Pittsfield.

The Kaplan children who came with them from Europe were, according to their ages:

Harry (Aaron) -- Later married and settled in New York City.

Bella (Beile) -- Was married while they lived in Sandisfield to Jack Penziner and also moved to New York City.

Joe (Meyer) -- Later married Fannie Greenfield of Lenox. Fannie originally came from Holland. Joe and Fannie settled in Great Barrington on Monterey Road. Joe joined in his father's cattle business. Joe and Fannie had two daughters and a son. The oldest daughter, Edith, married and moved to Arizona. The second daughter Frieda married

Milton Lifshietz of Pittsfield and they moved to Yonkers, New York. Their youngest child, Sanford, was with the parents when the family moved to Millerton, New York, where Joe became interested in cattle auctions in addition to his regular cattle business. Sanford continued his education through Bell High, New York. He attended law school and eventually became a judge.

Sara (Sore) -- The fourth child was married to Sam Lubowitz in New York City. Her youngest son, Dr. Harold Lubowitz, became a government consultant in Washington.

Pauline (Pearl) -- Was married to Ruben Tablitz in Wursted County.

Ida (Itke) -- Was married to Sam Lesne in New York City.



Sam and Tillie Kaplans' eight children

Lena (Leah) -- Was married to Richard Kirshner in New York City.

Leo (Leible) -- The youngest, lives in Great Barrington and runs a multi-state cattle business. He is the only one born in the United States that stayed here in town.

Paul's Tale

Hundreds of thousands of East European Jews found their lives back home almost unendurable. With hardly any money to sustain themselves or to educate their children, many parents looked for ways of saving the lives and futures of their families. Although it was heartbreaking for them to separate from their children, they sent their offspring to America, and their dramatic stories could be repeated again and again.

A good example is the story of the family of two more people who are listed on the original Synagogue charter of 1926, Ike (Isaac) Broverman and his son Nathan B. Martin. The life of this family was told by Ike's son Paul (Pinhas), who was the sixth child in the family:

"I was born in an obscure village named Suemtzi in the Russian Province of Ukraine, the sixth child of Isaac and Rebecca Broverman in the year of 1905, the same year that my sister Rose and an uncle (my father's brother) went to the United States, and three of my mother's brothers went to Argentina. Suemtzi had about four or five scattered small stores, one church and no post office. There was one parochial school. We were not admitted there because we

were Jews. After three of the older children had already gone to America, my sister Doabe (Dora), my brother Aaron



Three generations of Brovermans in Russia in 1906

(Archie) and I had no other way of receiving our schooling but to walk more than three miles and across the river to the village. It was an all-Russian school.

"I vividly remember my childhood years when my brother left for the United States late in 1908 and my sister in 1910. My father taught the younger children the Hebrew alphabet and to recite the morning prayers. In the years 1912 and 1913, Aaron and I were sent to a boarding school in Rojachev, twelve miles away, and my father used to come about every other week on Friday to take us home for the weekend.

"In Russia, my father had his hand in several small businesses and we were well provided for -- by those

standards. My childhood companions were Russians. To be accepted by them, a child had to do what they were doing -- spending time in the fields and in the woods, driving cattle and sheep. At the age of ten, I was able to ride a horse bareback. These associations helped in later years, in the times of the uprisings.

"My oldest sister, Rohel (Rose), was attractive, but there was no future for her in a small village; therefore, we were lucky that our uncle Broverman had already taken his family to the United States. He lived in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and Rohel was sent to him. Later, she married Dave Martin. My older brother Nathan was then keeping company with a Russian girl. This was shocking to an Orthodox Jewish family. So, in the year 1908, he was also sent to the United States. For a few years he lived at the home of Rohel while he worked at the General Electric plant in Pittsfield with his brother-in-law Dave Martin. Therefore the name Martin was added to his name, and he then became known as Nathan B. Martin. Later he settled in Great Barrington and married Edith Pomerantz. In 1910, my other sister Brindle (Bessie) followed the other two. She also went to Pittsfield and was later married to Max Bookless.

"In their letters to us, our sisters and brother told us about the comforts of the life in their new homeland. They told us about the hard wooden floors, the hot and cold running water, indoor toilet facilities, etc. While in Suemtzi we lived in two-room log-type houses with an earthen floor, a community water well and an outhouse. This made my

parents decide to go there also -- to the 'Goldene Medina' (the Golden Country). My father left in November 1913, and according to plans we were to follow soon in the spring of 1914.

"Problems arose that seemed minor at the time; they had their efefcts, however, on our family's future. In Czarist Russia, it was a 'must' to record the birth of males born into a family for draft purposes, while the female birth records were not compulsory. But when we decided as a family to leave Russia, the lack of birth records for my sisters (Dobe and Pesya) delayed us, and we could not obtain the proper traveling papers.

"When at last we received notice that we could leave any day, World War I broke out, followed by the Russian Revolution and the uprisings of the Civil War. Although these were far from us (we lived in the Ukraine, the breadbasket of Russia, where Germany had taken over the area until the Kaiser was overthrown and the Germans left), the impact bore directly upon our lives, for we were stranded, fatherless in a dangerous time.

"In 1918, our mother passed away from a typhus epidemic, and some friendly Russian families gave us attention and support at this period. They supplied us with bread, potatoes and dairy items, and even wanted to take us into their homes. But the Jewish people would not allow this because we all kept the Jewish dietary laws. Unable to accept the friendship of our Russian townsmen, we left the next morning for the next town where there was a larger

Jewish population. Here, Dobe, Pesya and I were placed with various families for almost three years, while Aaron stayed on in Suemtzi and Solomon was placed in an orphanage unknown to us.

"During these three years (1918 to 1920), I found myself doing what I could not do before. As I had mentioned before, my birthplace, Suemtzi, was such a small town that it had no library, and books were very scarce. But now in Rogachev, there was a library with a beautiful assortment of books in the Russian language. There were the complete works of James Fenimore Cooper, which acquainted me with the American colonial days; all the works of the Frenchman Alexander Dumas (The Count of Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers, and more. I also read Robinson Crusoe, The Prince and the Pauper, besides many books by Russian authors such as Tolstoy and Pushkin. I sat up nights reading by candlelight, always with the thought that the books were my best education.

"During these years, the political situation in the country was changing and, between the rulings of the Czars, the Germans, and the Bolshevicks, those who continually suffered were the Jews. On one occasion, a group of invaders forced the local Rabbi to bring out the Torah Scroll, put it on a table in front of the Synagogue and made all adult persons of the Jewish faith swear by it that they would give them whatever ammunition they had. Then they all left at nightfall. The next day we were requested to come and help bury the dead. I went with a company of about twenty men.

It was a horrible sight. I did not stay but went home with two other boys about my age (under fifteen years old). A few days later, a regiment of the Red Army came and arrested the leaders of the uprising and they were never seen again.

"I recall many other frightening events -- too many to mention. My occupation at that time was to herd some cattle out of town to graze during the day and to bring them back at sundown. I was mingling with the Russian boys who were also herding cattle and was well accepted by them. They hid me and protected me when the occasion called for it.

"At that time, the country of Poland became independent and, once again, we found ourselves in the middle of fighting which went on between the Reds and the Poles. When peace finally came to the area (about 1920), I made a friend of a Polish officer. I groomed his horse and took it out for exercises. I told him about my problems. (By then I spoke enough Polish to make myself understood.) He was very sympathetic and told me that Poland had been recognized by the United States and that there was an American consul in Warsaw and that I could make some postal communications with the United States. He suggested that I write a letter to my father. He would mail this letter through the Army and place his own name on the return address. So, after all these years, my father would finally hear from us. Since 1914 he had not known whether we were living or dead. After a while, it dawned on me that I

had better make a move to get into Poland and to try to make further contact with my father.

"Then I heard that a man I knew was planning to go to a large city in Poland (Rovno) to bring back sugar and salt which were scarece in our area. He and his friends took me with them. An open wagon, hitched to two teams of horses, loaded with hay and straw, was our means of transportation. It was in October and it rained at times, while it took us three days and nights to travel the seventy miles to Rovno, weaving through woods and fields to avoid the main highway which was patrolled. I wasn't well dressed, but the Russian drivers let me use their blankets and they also shared their bread with me, for I did not have anything.

"After two days, having covered forty miles, we reached the Polish border. The sentries were paid off and, upon crossing the border, we travelled on the main road, after midnight, for the last thirty miles. The Russians then kissed me on both cheeks (a Russian custom) and wished me well.

"I didn't know to whom to turn. As I walked the streets, I noticed a Jewish name on a drugstore window. I entered and, with tears in my eyes, started to tell the man about my situation. The living quarters of the owner's family was in the back of the store. He called his wife. By that time, I really broke down. The woman took me into the kitchen. Not having had a decent meal for over three days, I felt that the dinner offered to me was the best meal I had had in a long time.

"Through these people I learned that there was an organization in town called HIAS (Hebrew International Aid Society). There I was outfitted with American clothing and shoes -- and even given lodging. That was my first break! These were the people who sent the proper information to my father.

"The next day, I heard that my youngest brother, Sholem (Solomon), was living in the orphanage in the very same city. After not having heard about him for more than two-and-a-half years, I found him, and we had a very happy reunion. We managed to send word to my brother Aaron to join us with our two sisters, Doabe and Pesya, as soon as possible. Because of the unusually heavy snowstorms that winter, they could not come until April 1921. Just again, at this moment, I had another fortunate break in my history.

"In America, my father read in the Jewish newspapers that a man was going to the city of Rovno, Poland, and he would have an office there. Anyone who wanted to locate family members there would be helped by this man. My father made the right contact and arranged to sent me the sum of twenty-five dollars -- an enormous amount in those days. I was, of course, overjoyed to receive the contact and the money. I cashed one dollar at a time as I needed it (once in ten days).

"So it was that when the rest of the children arrived at Rovno, we went at last, together, by train to Warsaw. As we were five orphans in the group, the consulate rushed our



Paul and Ethel Broverman

visas through, and soon we arrived in Antwerp, Belgium. From there we sailed for America, on August 4, reaching New York City on August 28, 1921. I will always remember that while I was on the ship, I kept pinching myself, asking, 'Am I really on the way to America?' and, 'Is this just a dream?'"

Let us return to the story of Isaac Broverman, Paul's father, as his life story developed on the other side of the ocean, in America. Shortly after arriving in the United States, Isaac began to make plans to bring his wife and five children. But with the outbreak of World War I, he could

not get in touch with them.

No news could come through from his hometown Suemtzi, which was about 200 miles from Kiev in Russia. It was only after seven long years, in 1920, that he learned that his wife Rebecca had passed away. But because he now expected his five younger children to come, Isaac remarried, so that he could have a real home for his family when they would at last arrive.

When Isaac first came to America, in 1913, he stayed with his daughter Rose on Onota Street in Pittsfield. About three years later, in 1916, he became established in Great Barrington, where he bought the Kelsey House on North Street. There he owned a junk yard, keeping all the articles he purchased by scouring the countryside with a horse and wagon. He kept his merchandise, as has been mentioned, in the building next door, owned by Charles Lee. Thus he was later instrumental in buying that building and establishing the Synagogue on North Street.

As was mentioned before, Ike's oldest daughter, Rose, had come to this country in 1905. While she lived with her aunt and uncle Broverman in Pittsfield, she worked as a seamestress. Later she married Dave Martin and had three sons, while living on Onota Street. Sam, the oldest, was a chemist with the Dutch Boy Paint Company. He died at an early age. Their second son, Jack, operated Jack's Delicatessen. And their third son was also a chemist. He

now lives in California.

Nathan (Broverman) Martin, who lived in this household, eventually left his employment at General Electric and became a conductor on the Berkshire Street Railway trolley car company, which ran between Pittsfield and Great Barrington. In Great Barrington he met Edith Pomerantz and later married her. He opened a grocery store in the building later occupied by Joseph Hazzard at 154 Main Street, and he and Edith lived in the apartment upstairs. They had two children -- Helen Fisher, now in Plantation, Florida, and Charles, who married a girl from Houston, Texas, while he was in the Air Force. In Texas, Charlie operated the Texas Carpet Company until he died in 1976.

Nathan B. Martin later started a cut-price meat market on Railroad Street in Great Barrington, in partnership with his brother-in-law, Julius Rams, who had married Kate Pomerantz, Edith's sister. This enterprise was thriving while it was next to the A&P grocery store. But when the A&P moved to Main Street in 1927, Nathan's business dropped, and the store was sold to Morris Goldberg. Julius Rams then moved to Lee, Massachusetts, where he opened the Lee Supermarket, while Nathan and his family moved to Springfield. He worked at a supermarket there until he died in 1935.

Ike Broverman had a second daughter, Bessie (Brindle), who also left Russia in about 1910, for Pittsfield, where her sister and brother had preceded her. She was later

married to Max Bookless, a young man known in 1917 as a "well-to-do" milkman, with a pasteurization plant and a milk route of his own. Max died in 1947. Their son, Danny, lives in Rochester, New York; their daughter, Esther Schechter, lives in Sarasota, Florida; Rita Batten lives in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Arlene Levine lives in Pittsfield. Bessie died in Pittsfield in 1980.

Dora (Dobe) Broverman lived at her father's home on North Street in Great Barrington for two years after her arrival. In 1923, she was married to Jack Morgenstern, who was employed at the General Electric plant in Pittsfield. In 1926, they moved to New York City. Dora and Jack had two sons who now live in California, and a daughter who lives in Spring Valley, New York. Dora passed away in 1974.

Archie (Aaron) Broverman, who was about eighteen years old when he came to the United States, worked immediately with his father, Isaac, in the junk business. In about 1925, he went into a business for himself, and later opened a gasoline station on State Road. A number of years after that, he built a diner next to the station and leased it out. He married Jeannette Cusick of Pittsfield, and they had two children -- a daughter, Joan (later Bailbeaux), and a son, Irwin. Both now live in Sheffield. Archie, who was an ardent Republican, took great interest in local politics. In the year 1965, he leased out his gasoline station on State Road and purchased a bar-and-grill in Sheffield, which he and his wife Jeannettte operated until his death in 1972.

Paul (Pinchas) Broverman, whose moving tale has already been told, was a teenager when he arrived in Great Barrington. He was eager to learn the language of his new country, and shortly after his arrival he entered Dewey School. The teacher who tried to help him in his endeavor was Katherine Ruane. With patience and interest in the progress of her pupil, she helped him along in his career. In English studies, he was placed first in the third grade, while in math and other subjects he did sixth grade work. After one year in the school, he completed what he could learn in Dewey School.

Paul then learned how to drive a car and he went to work for his brother, Nathan, and Julius Rams -- cutting meats as well as delivering orders to customers. In 1929, when the market changed hands, he went with the Rams to Lee. During the following years, during the Depression, Paul considered himself lucky to receive eighteen dollars a week plus room and board. Sometimes, as Paul remembered, "Rams was not able to pay me every week. He told me to keep a record of non-payments. So when I got married in 1934, I had over one thousand dollars coming to me. Rams set me up in housekeeping, bought and paid for all my furniture! Had he paid me, I don't think I could have saved that much." Paul even managed to buy a Packard touring car and considered himself fortunate to be one of the family for many years.

In 1933, through his niece in Springfield, Paul met Ethel Ramsey. After a year of courtship they were married

and spent at three-day honeymoon in New York City, at the Hotel Victoria. They had their first child in May 1937, but two sad events soon marred the happiness of the young couple. First, their child died at the age of thirty days. Then, Paul himself almost lost his life when a bottle of alcohol exploded in his hands and saturated his clothing with the burning flames, causing him to be laid up for almost a year. During all of that time, he worried that he might not be able to use his hands again.

In the year 1941, their son Harvey was born, and Paul and Ethel found a new outlook on life. In 1948, when Rams sold out and moved to Springfield, the little family selected another way in which to direct their future, deciding to move to Great Barrington. There the Larkin Market on Railroad Street was available. Paul formed a partnership with Morris Goldberg and they continued together for two years. Then Paul bought the little store on the corner of State Road and North Street until this enterprise outgrew its space, and Paul sold the store and bought the Benham house across the street, on State Road. Here he built a large building which is still standing. The upstairs was made into a spacious apartment for the family, and the downstairs became the larger grocery store where both he and Ethel worked harmoniously and developed a large clientele.

Paul and Ethel recalled many happy occasions. Their son Harvey prepared himself for Bar Mitzvah. His teacher was Rabbi Axelrod. The rabbi taught the youth the proper

prayers which he would have to recite when he reached thirteen years of age.

In 1954, the Brovermans were proud to celebrate this joyous moment, and they held a big party in the Synagogue, with family and friends participating and attending a dinner in the social hall.



Rabbi Axelrod congratulates the Bar Mitzvah boy

A few years later, Ethel was asked to join the local Hadassah chapter and she became a life member.

Last but not least, when Paul and Ethel celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in 1959, they did it in a very interesting way. They gave a "sort of party" by giving the students of the Dewey School free refreshments during that week. This way, Paul expressed his appreciation for the first steps of his Americanization, in Great Barrington.

In 1967-68, Ethel's health began to fail. After a few operations, she fell into a coma for a few months and then passed away. Paul could not continue alone. He sold the

building; but later, he had to take it back at a financial loss. His second buyer made two apartments upstairs and the downstairs is now the location of a pizza parlor.

Paul now lives in one of the upstairs apartments. He is semi-retired, holding part-time jobs. He takes trips to visit relatives who live at some distance -- such as uncles who also left Russia early in this century, those who also ran away from the pogroms there, but landed in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He has visited the family of his deceased brother Nathan in Houston, and he also visits his sister Pauline who lives in Pittsfield. Paul always liked to attend various sports events, especially bowling, in which he sometimes participated.

Paul had more bits of information to add about his family's colorful history: "Pauline (Pesya) Broverman went to Dewey School for two years. Later she went to live in Pittsfield where she stayed at the home of our sister Bessie Bookless, who helped her go through a school of cosmetology. Then Pauline moved to New York City, where she opened her own beauty shop. There she met Eddie Hollman, to whom she was married. In 1937 they moved back to Pittsfield, and they both operated an Army and Navy store on Columbus Avenue. Eddie had to serve in World War II and, when he came home in 1970, he re-opened his store on Fenn Street. The Hollmans have two daughters -- Cheryl Donaldson, who lives in Goshen, New York, and Janice, who lives in Boston, Massachusetts. Eddie died in 1981, and Pauline now makes her home on Upper North

Street in Pittsfield.

"Solomon (Sholem) Broverman, the youngest of the Broverman family, went to Dewey School through several grades. He worked for our father and for our brother, Archie, in the junk yard. He worked, later, in the Barrington Manufacturing Company on Bridge Street. He married Rose Mercier and in 1935 they moved to New York City. They had a son and two daughters. Solomon was employed by the Rheingold Brewery Company for more than thirty years. He was then retired by the company with a pension. He lives with his wife in New York City.

"The oldest member of the family, Isaac, always considered himself lucky that circumstances in his hometown in Russia caused him to go to the United States no later than he did -- that is, before the rest of us, before World War I. He and his cousin Rebecca, whom he married in 1885, as well as all of the other members of the family kept on repeating, 'What would have happened to all of us if our trip had been delayed?' Now, after all of his children learned the language of this country and found their way in life, and his second wife had passed away in 1937, Isaac was left alone in his house on North Street in Great Barrington. But, his adherence to his religion kept him from being lonely.

"During all the years that he lived in Great Barrington, Isaac Broverman never gave up his membershp and vital interest in the Synagogue, Ahavath Shalom, in Pittsfield on Robbins Avenue. There he could meet some of



Solomon, Pauline, Dora, Bessie, Paul and Aaron (Archie) in 1962

his friends of old times. In the year 1941, he donated a Torah scroll to that Synagogue. The acceptance of the Torah and a dinner given in his honor had a reverse ending, because that evening happened to be December 7, 1941. The master of ceremonies announced that Pearl Harbor had been attacked! The Kaddish was then recited by the group. Soon after that, Isaac Broverman's health deteriorated and two years later, in December 1944, he died at the age of eighty-two. He was buried in the Pittsfield Jewish Cemetery, with his living children mourning for him and reciting the Kaddish."

A House Painter, Communal Leader


Isidor Karp

When Isidor (Yeshaya ben Asher) Karp came to Great Barrington in February of 1922, his family then included his wife Mary (Berger), his oldest son Oscar, his second son Robert, and his young son Bernard, who was about four years old. They lived at 8 Stockbridge Road for about fourteen years, and here their daughter Betty was born.

Isidor was by trade a house painter, and a very good one. While he first began as a painter in New York City, he learned about one Caligari, a painter of Great Barrington, through his contacts with other painters, Italians, whom he knew in New York. Karp moved to Great Barrington, was employed by Caligari for many years, and was always sought out by Caligari's clientele.

Upon his arrival in town, Isidor joined the recently organized Jewish community and was immediately put on

the Synagogue Committee, making him the eighth member of the board. Karp brought with him a rich background of Jewish learning, and in keeping with Jewish culture and its traditions, he saw the need for hiring a local rabbi. So in the year 1926, it was Karp who was authorized to go to New York City for that purpose. He first placed an ad in the Yiddish Daily paper, and thereafter went to New York to follow up his errand. There he met a suitable applicant and returned to Great Barrington with a young man, Rabbi Jacob Axelrod. Isidor presented him to the entire membership, and the Rabbi was hired.

Life in the small town was very much to the liking of the Karp family. However, in the year 1926, as town records show, they suffered a tragic blow when the youngest boy of the family met with an accident. As Barney ran across the main street, a car hit him, he fell on to the trolley car rails, and died instantly from a fractured skull. The child was then, as recorded, six years, eleven months, and seventeen days old. Bernard was buried in Brooklyn, New York, and Rabbi Axelrod supervised the Shiva (mourning week) rituals.

The death of the child of course affected the whole family, but particularly the young mother. She soon thereafter began to fail in her health. At the age of forty-six, she died in Fairview Hospital, in 1935, of intestinal obstructions caused by adhesions. She, too, was buried in Brooklyn.

Isidor thus was left with three children, Oscar, Robert and his young daughter Betty. He moved the family to the second-floor apartment in the Axelrod house at 29 State Road; there his children would have kind neighbors and friends.

After they graduated from Searles High School, Oscar and Robert went to New York City. Betty later married Norman Shalett of Pittsfield, and they made their home in that city. In New York City, Oscar began to work in a restaurant, and Robert worked in a jewelry store. Oscar later became the owner of a famous restaurant in New York City, Oscar by the Sea, on Third Avenue between 67th and 68th Streets. Years later he brought his brother into the business with him.

While Robert still owned his small jewelry store in Brooklyn, a young woman, Rose Shure, came to work for him part-time, though her main occupation was that of a kindergarten teacher. It was during these years that Isidor Karp came at times to the city to see his children.

At Robert's, Isidor, the widower, met Rose and was impressed with her Jewish religious background. Eventually Isidor married Rose and brought her to Great Barrington. They moved to a small apartment at the Favor house, next door to the Axelrods.

For a number of years (seven or eight), Rose taught kindergarten in Sheffield. Here her little pupils and their mothers adored Rose for her warm and outgoing personality. Rose was very interested in the women's

communal activities in Great Barrington and joined the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society, where she was able to contribute much because of her strong traditional background. She became a member of Hadassah as well, and was later honored by that organization when she was presented with a Hadassah life membership.

In later years though, Rose's health was weakened, her doctor, Dr. Thomas Gilligan, permitted Rose to make the journey to Israel because he knew how important this trip would be for her. Rose's journey to the Holy Land lasted for several months, and she returned, thrilled with her experiences.

Some years later, Isidor died and was buried in Brooklyn. Rose died in 1972, at the age of sixty, and was buried in New Jersey.

Yossel'sTwo Sons

Early in this century the Hebrew writer Yehudah Steinberg wrote the book Hahatoofim (in Hebrew), The Snatched Ones. In it he discussed the various ways young Jewish boys in Russia were taken from their parents into the Russian army. Some of these boys were at times as young as seven. Mothers often fed their children salty herring without letting the children drink any water, so that they would remain small in size. This vignette is a living illustration of another method of how snatching was warded off.

The parents -- Yoseph and Gittle Slaminsky -- used a different family name for their second son, so that it would seem as if the older boy Michel (Max) was an only son. The new baby, David, was given the family name Liss, as if he, too, was an only son, living with them. They did this because an only son would be left home at the discretion of the conscription officer. The fact that Michel and David had the same set of parents is evidenced by the Jewish names on the back wall in the Synagogue in Great Barrington: one wall plaque reads "David Liss, the son of Yoseph and Gittle"; and another plaque reads "Michel, the son of Yoseph and Gittle."

These two small signs in Great Barrington today, in their eloquent way, carry forward our memory of past Jewish ordeals and history.



David L. Liss

Early in this century, Joseph and Gittle's four children left the Minsk Guberne in Russia and came to New York City. There, Anna and Minnie were married and stayed on. Michel (Max) and his wife Gussie Slaminsky, however, followed the trend of the time and left the close city environment for a different lifestyle. They moved to the Sandisfield area, leaving their oldest son Jake in New York. After a while they bought a place in Monterey, and then they purchased the house and farm on Cottage Street in Great Barrington.

Gussie took sick; she passed away in 1921, and was buried in Pittsfield. Max remarried. His second wife, Bella, was a very kindly person who became like a real mother to the children.

She also helped Max with the chores on the farm, tending to the cows and the chickens as well as taking in paying guests during the summer months.

Max's children who came with him from New York

were:

Anna, who was later married to Joel Halfand and lived in Yonkers, New York. They are now retired and have a son named Steven.

George (Yosef, named after Max's father) and Benjamin (Baruch). George married Bettye Shusterman of Pittsfield and they had three daughters: Judy, Linda and Brenda. All three continued their education after they graduated form the local Bryant School and Searles High School.

George and Bettye had a home built on Manville Street in Great Barrington. For many years George and Benjamin ran a men's clothing store, The Army and Navy Store on Railroad Street. Benjamin later married Ruth (Rohel Feigel) Hurewitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey, and moved to Lee where he and Ruth opened a store on Main Street. They built their home on Stockbridge Road. They have two daughters: Marcia (Malka) and Jane (Leebe Shula). Both girls went to Pittsfield for their Jewish education and went to college later for their general studies. Ruth, though she lived in Lee, continued her membership in the Great Barrington chapter of Hadassah.

After George Slaminsky died, he was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Great Barrington. Then Bettye sold the Army and Navy Store to the people who now own the Yellow Balloon on Main Street.

David Liss followed his brother Max into the Berkshires. He and his wife Rebecca Nevins and his oldest

daughter Anna first lived with Max when the Slaminskys resided in Monterey. Here the Lisses' second daughter Sally was born in 1918. From here the Liss family moved to Great Barrington to Pearl Street, where their son Joseph (Yossel, after the child's grandfather, Yossef) and their youngest daughter Mildred were born.

David Liss for a time ran a dress store, then sold it for five thousand dollars, which was then considered an enormous amount. He thought that he would do even better in a larger city. So he and his family moved to Springfield, to a home on Chestnut Street. However, things didn't work out that way, and about two years later the family moved back to Great Barrington. Their daughter Sally stayed on in Springfield at the home of a girlfriend until Sally finished high school there during that year. When David's family returned to Great Barrington in about 1934, he earned his livelihood by selling ladies' garments to customers at their homes in the surrounding towns. Later, David Liss and Mollie Nager, who had also run a clothing store, opened the Specialty Shop located on Main Street (where the Pittsfield Co-operative Bank today has its southern driveway). This joint venture was successful, but when it became known that the whole area had been purchased for a large supermarket, the A&P, both partners looked for other places. Mollie Nager soon opened her shop in the Robbins block on the second floor over the Endicott Johnson's shoe store, and Dave Liss became a partner of Harry Deykin's furniture business on Railroad Street. Dave's son Joseph, who had

just graduated from Searles High School, at that time helped out delivering furniture for this business. It was Joseph who in later years recalled these earlier business ventures and related them by telephone from Florida, where he lives today.

When young Joseph Liss was conscripted into the army, David Liss learned about the availability of a dress shop in Lee. The owner of the Hume's Store there had recently died, and the dress shop was put on the market. Dave, who wanted to prepare a business for his son upon the latter's return from the army, decided to buy Hume's Store, and he commuted daily from his home to Lee to run it. When Joseph was discharged and came home, he joined Dave in the store, according to plan.

From the Synagogue charter, we see that both Max Slaminsky and Dave Liss took special interest in the institution, for both were elected as trustees of the board. Although Max's interest eventually waned, David continued to show a deep commitment to the local Jewish community. He attended all religious services as well as participating in all the meetings of the men's club, and was willing to assume responsibilities on many committees. On the Jewish holidays, Dave Liss served as Gababi; in the synagogue organization, he acted as treasurer. He was also on the cemetery committee when it was organized.

David Liss's children were:

Anna -- who married Louis Goldberg in Springfield in 1934. They live in Springfield with their two children and own a wholesale meat business.

Sally -- who married Jack (Jacob) Penziner in 1937. Jack was born in Sandisfield, three miles away from the Monterey Store, in 1913. When he was fourteen years old, the family moved to Sheffield (1927). The parents of seven children -- Louis, Eva, Dave, Sam, Ida, Jack and Rosalyn -- they tried to give them all the education they could. Thus Sam went to college and thereafter received a law degree. However, by the time Jack graduated from Sheffield High School, the era of the depression was at its highest. So, Jack explained, he had to be satisfied with a year of graduate courses, and in 1932 he decided to go out and look for a job. After one month, he chose to go into the cattle business. When his parents died and five of his brothers and sisters moved away, Jack and Sam were left with the house, and thus these two brothers decided to become partners in the cattle business.

They remained partners for many years until their retirement. Jack and Sally live on the farm today. They have three children. A daughter, Bernice Bronstein, lives in the vicintiy of Boston and with her husband is in the antique business. A son Rodney lives now near Boston, Massachusetts. And youngest daughter Susan, who married Sandy Lipton of Pittsfield, is a dancer and artist and has made many paintings of local scenes such as "The Walk in

the Medical Center." She and Sandy of the Lipton Company have two boys, Jeffrey and Michael.

Dave Liss's son Joseph (Yossel) -- married Eleanor Bookless of Pittsfield. They conducted a ladies' garment business in Lee. They have a son, Howard, who lives in Hawaii, and a daughter who lives in Lee. Joseph and Eleanor have retired and moved to Florida.

Mildred -- Dave's youngest daughter, was married to her cousin Milton Nevins of New York City. They had no children. After her husband died, Mildred moved to Springfield, where she lives near the family of her oldest sister, Anna Goldberg.

In May 1953, Rebecca Liss became ill and died. She was buried in the newly acquired Jewish cemetery in Great Barrington. Dave then sold his house on Cottage Street and moved to another house on State Road. By 1959, Dave took sick and suffered from multiple illnesses. In October of that year, he passed away and was buried near his wife in the Great Barrington Jewish cemetery.

Jack Penziner's sister Rosaline met Louis Levine who was working for the Nagers. These two were married and opened a meat business in Great Barrington. Rosaline, who was family minded, invited her nephew Jack Pevzner and his wife Millie Cohen to live in a small apartment in her house while he worked selling merchandise from his truck to people in the towns around. Later Jack bought their own house and two stores.

Mildred tells an interesting story which could be added to other early immigration stories of Ellis Island. When Millie's father landed on the island, the immigration officer couldn't spell the name Kollovado. "All right, forget about it, and your name from now on will be Cohen." So for the rest of his life, his name was officially Cohen though in the Synagogue services he was not considered as one of the Cohanim (of the ancient priests).

Jack and Millie Pevzner were married and moved to the Great Barrington area, to be near the Penziner family. They found that Rosaline Penziner had moved to New York City after graduating from high school, looking for her future there. During one of her homecomings, she met Louis Levine (who came from Sandisfield), and worked for the Nagers. Louis and Rozzie (as she was called) were married and went into the meat business. It was in their house that Jack Pevzner and Millie found a home for a number of years, while Jack made a living by selling various goods out of his truck in many little towns around. Later, Jack and Millie bought their own home on South Street in Great Barrington. They opened a clothing store in Lee, and subsequently, also a store in Great Barrington which they called Country Squire.

Jack Pevzner later found time to attend services which were offered by Rabbi Axelrod at the Ahavath Shalom Synagogue, and Millie became very active in the Ladies' Auxiliary. She was its president for many years. She also was a member of the local chapter of Hadassah as well as becoming a life member.

Jack and Millie's son David plunged right in to his father's business after graduating from high school and is very successful. David is married to Susan Glucksman of Stockbridge. They have four children: Daniel, Lisa, Matthew and Amy.

Jack and Millie Pevzner also have three daughters. Lynne has a bachelor's degree from Simmons of Boston and a master of business administration degree from Rollins in Florida. She is married to Dr. Daniel Kaplan. With their two children Rachel and Benjamin, they live in Florida. Paula, received her bachelor's degree from Skidmore. She and her husband, David Greenwald, a film editor, live in Manhattan. And Holly, a graduate of Simmons College, continues her studies in optometry. She is married to Jeffrey Schneider and they live in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Rozzie and Louis Levine owned their home on State Road as well as the building in which they carried on their business. Rozzie and Louis had one daughter, Sandra, who was married later to Arnold Sossner, son of Louis and Florence Sossner, who came to Great Barrington from Springfield in the early 1930s. Arnold continued his education in Kingston, New York. He then received his degree and was employed right away as an engineer. Arnold and Sandra have three children, a daughter and two sons. They live in Kingston, N.Y.

Socially, Rozzie became very involved in community affairs, while she also became the mother-like hostess to the son of her sister Ida Drucker, Bob Drucker. Now, Louis

retired from his meat business. He and Rozzie bought out the men's clothing store of Milcowitz in Canaan, Connecticut. They then employed Bob Drucker as a helper. In Pittsfield, Bob met Sharon Meirowitz. Later they married. They built their home on Highland Drive in Great Barrington (where they and their daughter and two sons still live today). Rozzie and Louis took in Bob as a partner.

Rozzie became increasingly involved in her communal responsibilities, including the sale of the Mother's Way Cookbook, and she and Louis sold the Canaan store to Bob. Rozzie became ill and then passed away and was buried in the local Jewish cemetery.

Thus the families of the two brothers with different names -- Michel Slaminsky and David Liss -- have family members involved through Sally's relatives in community affairs yet today.

A Large and Enterprising Family

Another person signing the Synagogue charter was Joseph Hayim Brickman. He and his wife Clara Crystal Brickman came to this country from the Ukraine in Russia, from the Odessa area. The young couple, aged nineteen and eighteen, together with their little daughter Hanna Leah (Anne Lousie), were part of the huge migration of Eastern European Jews. They fled from the pogroms -- the massive killings of Jews and robbing of their properties, with the nod of the government. All these fleeing Jews kept moving west-ward to embark on boats going to the United States.



Joseph Hayim and
Clara Crystal Brickman

By the time the Brickmans reached the western shores of the European continent, the little money they had had dwindled, with only enough to cross the Channel. In London they had to wait until Joseph could earn enough for their steerage steamship ticket to New York City.

At last Joseph and Clara arrived at Ellis Island, the gateway to the "Goldene Medina." They found their dwellings, as all their friends did, on the Lower East Side. Here the couple had their next four children: Ida (Hykeh), Max (Mottle), Morris (Moshe) and Mollie (Malka). When Mollie was one year old, Joseph was able to manage financially, so that the family could go for a vacation, as did the other neighbors at that time. The family journeyed to Sandisfield, where they enjoyed their stay. In fact, Joseph and Clara thought that it would be better for the family to remain there, at least for the sake of Moshe, who couldn't take it any more in the city; he just couldn't breathe easily in New York. So, before the summer was over they decided to stay on, and soon thereafter they acquired some chickens and cows and found a handyman to help out with the chores. Their youngest child Nathan (Noah) was born in Sandisfield in 1919.

Mollie, the youngest daughter, recollected those early days and memories. She said that although there was a lot of snow and cold weather which they had to endure, and despite having to work one's way to the water-well and the outhouse in the yard against the rough winds, the children enjoyed their new life in the countryside. In the evenings the young ones were amused by the phonograph with the large horns, playing the wonderful records of operas and concerts by Caruso and other opera singers, as well as great Jewish cantors of the time, such as Yossale Rosenblatt. Mollie also remarked that in those days people didn't have to spend

large sums of money for hotels in order to be with friends and to enjoy their company. Instead, young couples and families visited their neighbors with their children, taking turns in various homes. The children would fall asleep in their clothes; then they were taken back to their own homes by sleigh, to be put to bed.

Anne, the oldest Brickman daughter, also reminisced about those "good old days" in an interview at her home on Berkshire Heights Road in Great Barrington. She remembered how her father was always concerned about the children's education of every kind. Her first teacher was a man, and after him came a woman, who also taught her and some of her siblings to play the paino which her father had bought. The family also had a young rabbi teach them how to recite the prayers and how to read a Yiddish paper.

Anne also recalled that she was sent to Richmond High School in New York City. Then with records of the school she was accepted in Massachusetts Agricultural College, which is now the University of Massachusetts. There she got her training, she recalled, in social work. As she looked back, she appreciated a special teacher who helped her with her English work. Later in her social work, she met Ralph (Reuven) Zenowitz from Tennessee. They were married and lived in Great Barrington. They have two children: Ralph Allan, who is now with the government in Washington, and Sondra Crystal Kaff. Both attended the local grammar school. Allan then continued in Berkshire School in Sheffield and went on to colleges in Connecticut

and Boston. Sondra got her secondary education at Miss Hall's School in Pittsfield and continued at Wells College in Syracuse, New York. She received her doctorate from the same university, where she met Steven Kaff, a professor in the graduate school. For two years both Sondra and Steven taught American students in Italy, on the college level. They now live in Syracuse, where they both teach. They have three children -- Harlan, Dino and Elisa. Harlan had his Bar Mitzvah celebration and ceremonies in 1983 in Great Barrington under the auspices of Rabbi Axelrod.

For many years (until 1981), Anne Lousie Zenowitz and Ralph owned a clothing store in the center of Great Barrington, on Main Street. Its name was the Anne Louise Shop, and for more than fifty years its attractive window displays served as a kind of landmark in the town. Anne Louise is listed in the book Who's Who in American Women 1964-65, as follows:



Ann Louise and Ralph Zenowitz

"Anne Louise Zenowitz born in Odessa Ukraine July 29, 1903, to Joseph and Clara (Crystal) Brickman. Brought to the United States in 1904. Studied University of Massachusetts, 1923-24, New York University 1928-29. Met Ralph Zenowitz and were married December 31, 1926.

Children -- Allan R. Zenowitz and Sondra Jane -- (Mrs. Stephen P. Kaff). Was Social Worker and director of northeast area with the Jewish Agricultural Society, New York City (1925-26). Anne Louise and her husband owned the shop in Great Barington 1932- . Director of Berkshire County Chapter of American Republican Chapter, 1950-55, Women's Club of Great Barrington, 1952-55, Berkshire Garden Center also 1952-55."

The Zenowitzes were interested in the Jewish Temple Anshei Amunim in Pittsfield, and took their family there to attend religious services.

Joseph and Clara's five other children are:

Ida -- the second daughter, graduated from a New York City high school. She married Moe Herman of Pittsfield. They have six children and live in Silver Springs, Maryland.

Max -- the third child, married Mollie Gaudler of Newton, New Jersey. They had two children.

Morris -- the fourth child, married Sara Krapkoff of Brooklyn, New York. They had four children: son Stewart lives in Rochester, New York; son Carl, an international banker, lives in New Jersey; and Mel J. lives in Torrington, Connecticut; while daughter Holly is married to Stewart Steinberg of Great Barrington and they live in Torrington, Connecticut. For a number of years Morris Brickman worked in the meat department of the Great Barrington First National Supermarket on Main Street at the corner of Church Street. Then he opened his own supermarket in Lakeville,

Connecticut. Some years later, in the late 1970s, he sold his store and retired with his wife to Florida.

Mollie -- the fifth child was born in New York City and came to Sandisfield at the age of one and lived there five years. She started school in Sandisfield in a one-room schoolhouse with double seats and desks. Then the family moved to Sheffield for a year, and in 1921 moved to Great Barrington. Mollie attended Dewey School and graduated afterwards from Searles High School, where she was an all-American youngster. She was manager of the girls' basketball team for three years and was sports editor of the class paper, "The Spectator." Mollie planned to continue her education at the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, New York, but her hopes were shattered by the outbreak of polio in the country at that time. She remembered that "it was very frightening then when all we heard about was 'No salk vaccine yet available.' "

That was when Mollie's business career started. For three years she worked at Sturtevant's (later Farshaw's) store on Main Street. The students at Berkshire School in Sheffield in those days shopped there for phonograph records. Mollie noticed how they all wore raccoon coats down to their ankles, with brown-and-white saddle shoes. She told that she was "in love" with the coats and decided to save five hundred dollars to get one. She ordered five hundred baby chicks by parcel post freight. She bought a brooder to keep the chicks warm, cleaned the chicken house every day with a scraper, fed them -- using up all her salary -

- and when the hens began laying eggs, at last she had something to sell. At the end of the season, she proudly declared, she bought the raccoon coat!

"When we went over Lebanon Mountain to Albany for dinner and dancing," she said, "it sure was warm while sitting in the rumble seat of our Chevrolet coupe!"

In 1935, Mollie married James Greenfield, and early in 1937 she and Jimmy opened the Greenfield's Shop on Main Street. But in September 1938, after an illness, James died and was buried in Pittsfield. Mollie, as a yong widow, continued to run the store until 1948, when she sold it to her brother Nathan Brickman.

In 1946, Mollie married Eli G. Cooper, a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Eli was chief engineer and manager of May Engineering, and served as a consultant for a corporation. During World War II he was a major in charge of small arms and development at the Pentagon and liaison between his division and the Marine Corps as well as serving the office of Strategic Services. Cooper received the Legion of Merit honor for his research work.

In 1948 the Coopers founded the business known as Cooper's Millworks on State Road, now the location of the Registry of Motor Vehicles building. Then in 1955 they started the Cooper Hardware and Art Supply



Eli and Mollie Cooper

store on Main Street. They retired in 1982 and live in their home on Lake Mansfield Road in Great Barrington.

Mollie, an active personality, served Great Barrington in many civic capacities. A former president of the Women's Auxiliary of Fairview Hospital, she was also chairman of the Civil Scout drive one year and chairman of the Cancer Society drive for two years.She helped in establishing the Southern Berkshire Chapter of the American Cancer Society, and was chairman of the local Red Cross. She also found time to serve as a leader of the Brownie troop for two years. She was always interested in drama and she worked on a committee to start the theater festival in Stockbridge. She was treasurer and a performer with the Barrington Players.

In the Jewish community as well, Mollie showed a lively interest, participating in decorating the Synagogue and in early years helping Rabbi Axelrod put on presentations of the Jewish Holidays. She is a member of the local Hadassah and of the Pittsfield temple Anshei Amunim.

The Coopers have three daughters. Lucille is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University. A teacher, she is married to Dr. Richard J. Zanini, superintendent of the Wethersfield, Connecticut, School System. They have three daughters and two sons. Dianne is a graduate of Syracuse University with a bachelor of fine arts degree. She is a freelance designer of children's clothing and did book covers

for Brown Publishing Company. She designed the artwork for The Mother's Way Cookbook produced by the local women's organization in 1966. She was confirmed at Temple Anshei Amunim and on the temple's ninetieth birthday celebrated the first Bat Mitzvah of the temple. Jackeline, the youngest daughter, is a graduate of Syracuse University with a bachelor of fine arts degree. She is a freelance fashion designer in leathers and suede, fur and folkart sweaters for her own company. She is married to Timothy J. Domkowski, who is business manager for their company.

Nathan Brickman -- the youngest child was born in Sandisfield in 1919. His schooling included studies at Dewey School and Searles High School as well as learning how to read the prayers in the Synagogue from Rabbi Axelrod. He married Ruth Moskowitz of State Road. After returning from World War II, he bought the Greenfield Smoke Shop from his sister Mollie in 1948. He belonged to the local Lions Club and was one of the original members. Nate and Ruth ran the shop together and later enlarged it. Nathan was a devoted member of Great Barrington's Synagogue. He attended almost all services. He held the presidency of the organization in 1951 and again in 1978. It was during that year that a special plaque was presented to Rabbi Axelrod honoring him for serving the community for more than fifty years. Nathan presided at the ceremonies.

Nathan and Ruth have two children. Courtney lives in Hanover, Pennsylvania, and has three children. Lauren is married to Ray Bowen and lives in Endwell, New York.

Nathan and Ruth sold their shop on Main Street and retired from business and from Great Barrington. They moved to Sun City, Arizona.

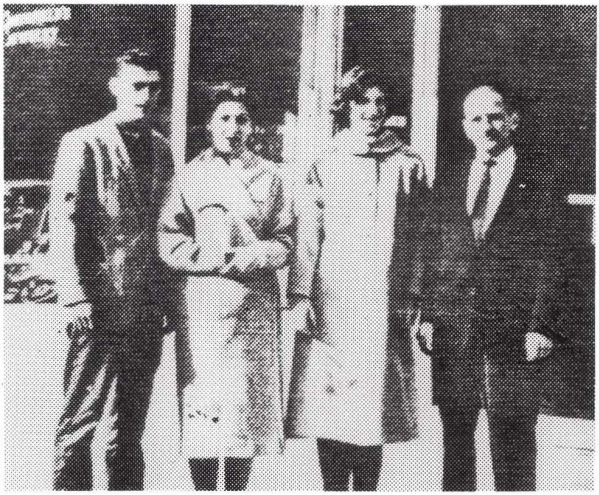


Clara Crystal Brickman

Joseph Brickman, patriarch of this large and active family, was himself a very enterprising man. At first he earned his livelihood in Great Barrington from selling and buying mainly fruits and vegetables. He bought his merchandise from wholesale sources, originally from New York City, and then from Albany and even from Florida. He sold his merchandise mainly to other stores in the vicinity. At home, he showed interest in the Jewish way of living.

Both Brickman and his wife were closely involved with the Synagogue. Clara (Hassyah) waş a member of the Synagogue Sisterhood. With her blonde hair and blue eyes she nevertheless was a typical Jewish mother -- she always took the time and effort to help other people with their needs, and in her own way she served the Synagogue, helping for various holidays and numerous functions. Clara died in the local hospital on Erev Purim in 1941 and was buried in

Staten Island on the following day. Joseph Brickman died in 1964 and was buried near his wife.



Nathan "Nate" and Ruth (Moskowitz) Brickman and their son Courtney and daughter Lauren

The Gans Company

Max (Meyer Feivel) Gans was born in Vilna, a city of many great scholarly Jews in Lithuania. Max came from a family of twelve children. It pleased his parents a great deal when they saw him off to the United States, where he could be with his uncle who had gone there some years earlier. Now, they knew, Max would be away from the difficult times that were the lot of the Jews in that country. Indeed, when Max came to Pittsfield in 1913, his uncle had a job already waiting for him.

A few years later Max met his future wife Florence (Bluma) Bissell. Her parents, Louis and Lena (Leah) Bissell, had come from Russia before the turn of the century. Their family originally settled in Staten Island, where Florence was born, and then moved to Pittsfield, hoping to improve their mode of living. Max and



Max Gans

Florence were married on November 6, 1920, and decided to live in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Here their oldest daughter Mildred Dorothy was born.

Louis and Lena Bissell by that time had moved to Lee, where Louis opened a dry goods store. A few months later, Louis became ill and died. He was buried in Pittsfield, as was Lena when she died years later. With Louis's death, Florence and Max left Greenfield and came to Lee to help Lena attend to the new shop. Lena could not have managed the store alone, for she was left with five young children at home. But the following year, 1921, when Lena became adjusted to the new circumstances, Florence and Max decided to look out for their own future and moved to the neighboring town of Great Barrington

The couple started their own small dry goods store. Eventually the pair, who always worked together, also introduced second-hand furniture to meet the needs of their customers. Later, in the 1940s when bottled cooking gas was introduced to the area, the Gans Company added that item to its business and developed the present Gans Furniture and Appliance Company. This business has continued for more than sixty years at 31 Railroad Street and is run by members of the Gans family today.

The first living quarters of Florence and Max and their family was on Main Street, in the vicinity of what is now Brooks Discount Drug Store. From there they moved to Railroad Street to an apartment on the second floor. Their daughter Lois was born there in the early 1930s. Then the

family moved to the house at 17 Church Street, and finally in 1964 they occupied the house at 29 Church Street. Here they lived until both Max and Florence passed away.

As a side line, and as a hobby, both Max and Florence bought and sold houses. Thus, they came to own at various times the following properties: a house at 51 Hollenbeck Avenue, which they sold later to Frieda Bissell Shocket; several houses on Church Street; the house on the corner of Main and Elm Streets. This house they eventually sold to the Great Barrington Savings Bank which now stands on that location in its enlarged building. At that time, the terms of sale included electing Max to the bank's board of directors.

After Florence's sister, Frieda Bissell, married Dave Schocket, this young couple also moved to Great Barrington. They lived first on Railroad Street where their daughter Bryna was born, and later they purchased the Gans' house at 51 Hollenbeck Avenue. Dave found employment in the Gans business as a delivery man. The Gans' two daughters, Mildred and Lois, and the Shockets' daughter, Bryna, studied at Bryant School and then continued through Searles High School. Millie pursued her education at Framingham State Teachers College, while Lois continued at Clark University in Worcester and Bryna Shocket went to the University of Connecticut at Bridgeport, where she received a bachelor of arts degree. It was during her college program that Millie met Irving Steinberg of Springfield at a sports event in Pittsfield. When they married

in 1941, she disrupted her college career, and a few months later, Irving was inducted into the Army for three years. He was in the medical corps serving in Africa.

When Irving returned from the Army, he and Millie lived in a rented house on Park Street. Here Mildred gave birth to Beth Suzanne. Two and a half years later, Beth became sick with nefritis, and on July 10, 1949, she died. She was buried in Pittsfield. The mother was struck with great sorrow from which she could never console herself. The loss of this child also caused a great deal of agony to the whole family, and her father Max mourned this child throughout his life.

Irving and Millie then had three other children. Howard, who later married Lynne Glazer, is now a member of the Gans Company and his family lives in Great Barrington. He and Lynne have two children, Sarianne and Michael Joseph. The Steinbergs' second son Lawrence married a local girl, Holly Brickman, the daughter of Sara and Morris Brickman. They now live in Methuen, Massachusetts, and have a daughter Lindsey Hanna. The youngest child of Irving and Mildred Steinberg is Debra Ruth. She is married and lives in New Jersey. Dorothy Steinberg was struck with multiple sclerosis in 1964 and has been bed-ridden ever since.

The Gans' youngest daughter Lois was married to Wallace Papo of Great Barrington, a student she met at Searles High School. When she was a young girl, Lois had

belonged to the local young Judea group known as the Young Israelites, under the leadership of Shifra Deykin. After her marriage, when she and Wallace moved to Long Island, Lois continued her Jewish affiliations, joining the local chapter of Hadassah, as well as the Women's B'nai B'rith Chapter, and the Merrick Jewish Center Auxiliary. While her children were young, Lois was also a leader of the Cub Scouts, of the Girl Scouts and also belonged to a theatrical group in Long Island. Wallace, a physical education instructor, was employed in a Long Island high school system.

Wallace and Lois had two children. Dr. Mark Robert Papo, a dentist in Queens, New York, is married to Susan Marquowith, who is an attorney in Manhattan. (Her grandfather's name was Markowitz.) The Papos' second child is Susan Papo. She lives in New Orleans where she is an executive of the Sheraton Hotel chain.

After twenty-two years of married life, Lois and Wallace went through divorce proceedings. Lois is now back in Great Barrington and working in the Gans Company as a member of the firm.

When recalling earlier years, Lois said that the family always kept a strictly Kosher kitchen and ate Kosher foods. The family celebrated the Jewish Holidays throughout the life of the parents. Yiddish was not spoken in the home, even though when Max came to this country he didn't know a word of English. The parents, however, spoke Yiddish to each other when they wanted to discuss some matter they



Members of the Gans family include, seated from left, Max and Florence Gans, Debra Steinberg and Mildred (Gans) Steinberg; standing, Howard Steinberg, Dave Schocket, Frieda Schocket and Irving Steinberg

preferred not letting their daughters Millie and Lois know about. Yet, somehow, Lois asserted, both daughters learned to understand some Yiddish.

Max and Florence were very interested in Jewish affairs in town. Both attended all the regular services that were conducted in the Synagogue, and they took part in the various functions and obligations that were prescribed. Thus, Florence served as president of the Sisterhood, took part in general fund raising and acted as hostess at special affairs. In the early days, Florence also attended to the poor, finding hospices for those Jewish people who passed

through the town, who needed help. Living and working close to the center of the town, Florence was, as people called her, "The information bureau of the community." She became a Hadassah member of the local chapter in 1946, at its inception.

Max also took upon himself all posts in the community. His name appears on the original charter of 1926, and at various times he was president, treasurer and chairman of committees such as the one for the cemetery. At religious services, Max took part, reading the Haftarah after the reading from the Torah.

In civic non-Jewish organizations, too, Max was active. He was a Mason and was on the board of directors of the savings bank. In his youth, Max had served in the United States Navy, even before he spoke English well. Max died on January 25, 1973. Florence's sister Frieda Shocket died on January 6, 1974. Florence passed away on April 21, 1980. She, her husband and her sister were buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Great Barrington. Dave Shocket sold his house on Hollenbeck Avenue and is retired, now living on Silver Street in town.

Now, the Gans Furniture and Appliance Company is incorporated. Irving Steinberg is its president, Howard Steinberg is vice president, and Lois Gans Papo is a member of the corporation. Like Howard and Irving, she attends the store daily in its original site on Railroad Street.

Kaplan, (Cohen), Tailor

The Jewish name Cohen indicates that the bearer is a direct descendent of the Cohanim or priests of the old days, when the first temple stood on Har Moriah in Jerusalem. Therefore, even in present-day services in a traditional synagogue the person with the name Cohen is called first to read from the Torah. Of recent years we find that the name Kaplan, too, often indicates a family of Cohanim. Thus the combination of the private name Samuel (or Sam) and the family name Kaplan has great Jewish significance, and it occurs more often than other combinations. Yet this does not necessarily mean that these people, named Cohen or named Kaplan, have any family relationship.

These vignettes illustrate this fact: the charter shows that the name of the vice president was Sam Kaplan (already discussed), which comes early on the list. But there was a second Sam Kaplan, who coincidentally lived in the same town in those early days and who also signed that 1926 charter. This Sam Kaplan and his wife Esther (Cohen) came to town amongst the earliest Jewish settlers and their home was on North Street.

This Sam Kaplan was a tailor and his shop was on Railroad Street. He kept very long hours at work, and therefore he felt compelled to send a letter of resignation to members of the synagogue.

His wife, Esther, was the daughter of Meyer Cohen. She was born in Russia and died in Great Barrington from a heart attack at the age of sixty-one on September 10, 1954. She was buried in the local Jewish cemetery. A few years later Sam also died and was buried next to his wife.

Sam and Esther had four children:

Mary -- the eldest, was friendly with Edith Stoskin, daughter of Morris Stoskin who also lived in that neighborhood. Mary later moved to California.

Sophie -- the second child was married to Murray Liebotiz. They had two boys and lived first in New York, and afterwards moved to Great Bàrrington.The parents were divorced, and the father and sons moved away. Sophie was a member of Hadassah for a number of years.

Moses -- the third child married a Kaminsky daughter from Sandisfield. They moved to California.

Carl -- the fourth child moved to the Boston area.

Another Dealer In Livestock Succeeds

Like many young cattle and horse dealers of the area, Sam Kalin often came to Great Barrington to look for livestock. At first he came from Springfield, often once a week. Finally, he and his wife Mary decided to move to this town and settle here. Sam Kalin joined the Synagogue, and was a signator of the 1926 charter.

The Kalins had three sons and a daughter, all of whom went to local grammar schools and Searles High School.

The oldest son, Louis Kalin, followed his father's trade. He worked mainly for Leo Kaplan in the Berkshire area. At that time he also had dealings with Harry Moskowitz. After a number of years, however, Louis bought a farm in



Mary Kalin



Morton, Louis, Harry and Beatrice Kalin

Canada and settled there. Eventually he switched from dealing with cattle and went into the real estate business.

The Kalins' second son Harry found a job in Springfield and settled there.

The third son Morton met Sylvia Berger, daughter of a wealthy businessman in New York City. They were married at a gala affair in New York and finally moved to Hollywood, Florida. Here he was a real estate dealer and

became very active in the local Jewish community.

Beatrice Kalin, the youngest in the family, met a young lawyer, Rosenbloom, from Springfield. After they were married, they lived in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. The Rosenblooms have a son, studying law, and two daughters.

In the middle of the 1940s, Sam became ill and when he died he was buried in Springfield. A few years later Mary remarried, to an old acquaintance from Springfield and she moved away from Great Barrington and back to her home town.

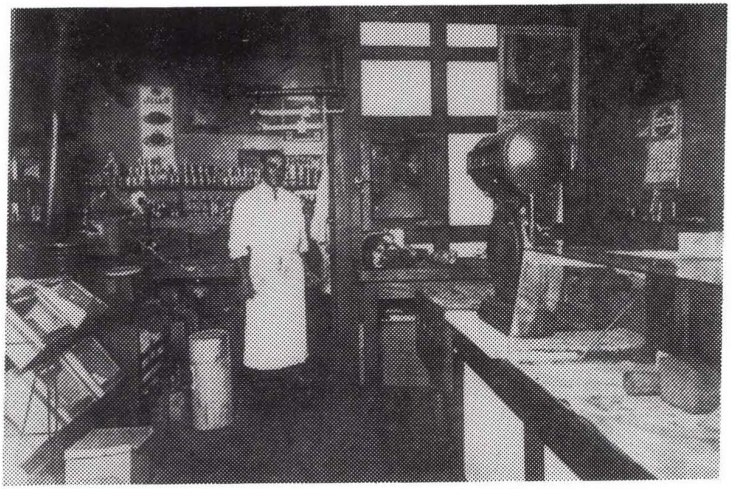
The Unknown Itinerant

Here is a tale of Great Barrington that is probably typical of many others. A man named Aaron Gruss came to the town about the time that the charter was signed by the Jewish people, and became a member of the local Jewish community. It is not known from where he came, and what caused him to come. We only know that he owned a gasoline station on State Road near the Pomerantz house. He came and left in the same way, only staying here for a very short time. If not for his signature on the charter, his living here probably would not have been remembered.

This is, no doubt, one of the examples of the roving lives of many Jews in many other places in the United States; it is an instance of the local histories to which Professor Salo Baron called our attention. Such Jewish life stories, often anonymous and unexplained, undoubtedly occurred and recurred in other locations and congregations.

Jewish Childhood Recollections

When the Great Barrington charter was signed by the local members of the community, one of the signatures was that of Morris Stoskin. His daughter Edith Taskin now lives in North Adams, Massachusetts. At a January 1983 meeting of the Berkshire Jewish Archives group, she kindly told about her father and the family. Later in the summer, when many of the same group met again in Sandisfield, Edith provided a written resume of her family and a 1920-era picture of her father in his store in Great Barrington. Here is her letter, with only a few words inserted.



Morris Stoskin in his Main Street store, early '20s

"My father Morris was one of six children, all of whom came to the United States in the early 1900s. He first settled in Pittsfield, where he lived with an older sister, Dora Markell, and worked at General Electric. When he met with an accident on one of the machines, he lost the tips of several fingers... In 1921, he married my mother, Lillian Schoenhous, who was a native of New York City. They settled on a farm on State Road in Great Barrington. Their first child, a son, was stillborn and was buried in the Orthodox cemetery in Pittsfield. Subsequently they had three daughters. I am the oldest and was born while we lived on State Road.

"After several years of farming, my father decided to open a small grocery and meat market at 126 Main Street. The family lived in a house at the back of the store. My two sisters were born while we lived there. As the eldest, I used to like to take care of my younger sisters, and on Saturdays we all went to the movies. I paid for my ticket (about twenty-five cents), though my sisters went in free because they were under twelve years of age. I also fondly recall the skating and sliding parties we had in the winter. One of my childhood playmates was Mary Kaplan (whose story appears elsewhere in this volume) who lived a short distance from us on Main Street.

"My sisters and I went to Dewey School and made our parents proud by being on the honor roll each time marks were given out. Every Sunday we all piled into our car and made a trip to visit my aunts and uncles and cousins

in Pittsfield. I can also recall going to Sunday School and learning some Hebrew, although it wasn't customary for girls to have religious training. I can also remember going with my parents to Shul (Synagogue).

"In 1937 when my father decided that he wanted to once again return to farming, we moved to the town of Lenox, where he had purchased a dairy farm. He died in the 1960s and was buried in the Pittsfield cemetery of the Orthodox Synagogue.

"My sisters are Vera Gangel of Schenectady, New York, the mother of a married daughter, and Laura Stoskin, my youngest sister, unmarried, who lives in Bethesda, Maryland.

"I am married to Albert Taskin, who operates a furniture store in North Adams, and we are parents of two grown sons."

A "Landsleit" Family Business On Railroad Street

A "landsleit" of Max Gans was another Great Barrington settler, Sara Segal, who learned about their first hometown connections only many years later. Among her stories to her children, she re-called the hardships she had endured when leaving "the old country." She was in her teens when her parents garnered what money they had in Vilna of Lita, to take her to a boat (in the steerage) heading for America.

It took many hard weeks before Sara reached New York City. Here she was later introduced to a young man named Ruby Feldblum, whom she married. Because Ruby's family had previously located in Canaan, Connecticut, (after their first arrival in New York) this young couple decided to move in the same direction. However, Sara and Ruby eventually moved onward, and settled in the neighboring town of Great Barrington. They considered themselves lucky when a job presented itself there to Ruby. Between the years 1905-08, he became the maintenance man for the local telephone company. Later, in the year 1926, Ruby Feldblum's name was also listed in the Synagogue charter.

The family's first home was on Pine Street, where their son Alex and daugher Isabelle were born. They then

moved to the second floor of the Pomerantz house, on the corner of State Road and North Street. There Martha and Harriet were born. But, when the Pomerantzes had to sell the house, the Feldblum family moved to their home on East Street.

Ruby enjoyed his job for many years, especially because of the friendly attitude of the people around him. At the age of sixty-five, according to the rules of the telephone company, he retired. Ruby and his wife then went to live with their daughter Isabelle Kosberg and her husband Leonard. These families lived together there until Ruby passed away in the late 1940s, and Sara about twenty years later.

The Feldblums' son Alex later married Henrietta Amazon of Pittsfield and had two sons, Stephen and Michael. Soon thereafter Alex's transportation business took the family to nearby Lee, where they lived for many years. When Alex and Henrietta retired they moved to Florida.

Leonard Kosberg, Isabelle's husband, who came from Sandisfield, conducted a clothes cleaning business at 26 Railroad Street until he died. His wife and son Irving then kept up the business. They moved the establishment to Bridge Street, where it has continued for many years.

An additional enterprise operated by the Kosbergs, in the early years, was The Hub Sandwich Shop. This was located just a few doors to the east of the original cleaning



Irving Kosberg with his parents, Isabelle and Leonard, in their dry cleaning shop

business. That other venture did not last very long, however, and the Kosbergs sold it to continue with the cleaning business only.

The Kosbergs' two children were Helene and Irving. Helene married Bruce Leavitt of Pittsfield; they have three daughters. Irving married Theresa Chenot of Housatonic and they have two sons, Jay and Joel, who prepared themselves for their Bar Mitzvah celebrated (by Jay) in 1977 and (by Joel) in 1979. They took lessons from Rabbi Axelrod.

The four Feldblum children enjoyed their education in town -- first at Dewey School and then at Searles High School. Two of the teachers who left a lasting good impression on Isabelle, as she told us, were Sara Rogers and Helen De Mouge.

The Town Gains A Generous Family

Early in the century Tillie Moskowitz Kaplan came to the United States with her husband and children. At home in Russia, she left two sisters and a brother. One sister left soon after, but had settled on the way in Scotland. The only brother, Abraham, also left Russia because he didn't want to stay in the 1904 Russo-Japanese war. He first went to Scotland and stayed there before he continued to this country. The last sister to stay in Russia, Mrs. Dorshay and her three children, later came and settled in New York City.

When Abraham Moskowitz came here, he met Mary Weinstein from the "Vilna Guberne" of Lita. In Lita, Mary's family were Zionists and her brother left for Israel (then Palestine) to join the Kibbutz movement. But Mary came to America with friends of the family.

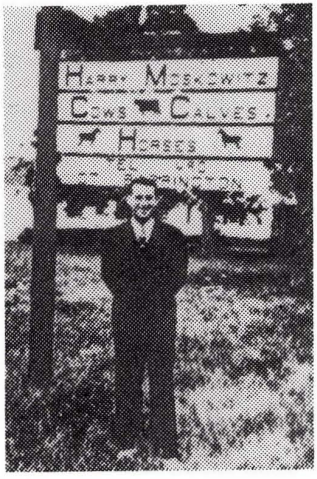
Abraham and Mary were married in New York City about the year 1912. Here they had their four children: Harry, Ruth, Herbert and Frances. Abraham earned his livelihood at carpentry. On a vacation to the Catskill Mountains, Abraham liked the life of the Jews there and decided to accept the invitation of his sister Tillie Kaplan to come to New Marlborough, Massachusetts. By the year

1932, he and his family moved to the farm he had bought which is located on Route 23 in Great Barrington.

Mary and Abraham became very active in the Synagogue and their children entered the local schools. The devotion of the Moskowitz family to the Synagogue was appreciated by the congregation. In 1937 the local group presented them with a silver plate for the couple's silver wedding anniversary.

Harry, the oldest son, entered the last year of Searles High School. Some years later, after his graduation, he became acquainted with Irene Baron. Her father was Dr. Israel Baron, a Brooklyn physician (and cousin to Professor Salo Baron of Columbia University). Her mother was the former Mirian Friedman. Irene came for a summer's vacation to her grandparents, Meyer and Feigle Friedman, who had just bought a summer home on Lake Buel Road, east of Great Barrington.

After Harry and Irene Moskowitz married they first lived on Route 7 at the north end of town. After that they occupied the house which formerly stood where the Great Barrington Savings Bank is now, at the corner of Elm and Main Streets. Abraham and Mary had built another small house west of



Harry Moskowitz

their large home on Route 23, then Harry's family moved into the large house.

Harry went into the cattle business. Later he also branched out into real estate and other enterprises. Harry and Irene were always interested in the Jewish communal affairs, and for the year 1945, Harry held the presidency of the Synagogue. Irene also held various positions in the Sisterhood, and she has been its president. She has been one of the original members of the local Hadassah since 1946, and then became a life member of the organization. She helped the Hebrew school prepare for its festivities and was active in raising funds through the cookbook project. Irene was also very active in the civic organizations. She was a member of the Republican Town Committee and chaired it for many terms. She took part in the committee for housing for the elderly, was a trustee of Fairview Hospital, a member of Red Cross and the Red Cross blood bank and many other organizations.



Harry and Irene Moskowitz

Both Harry and Irene were generous in their donations to the Jewish community. They had bought a white velvet curtain for the Aaron Kodesh (the ark containing the Torah), plus a deep red velvet cover for the Beema (the desk on which the

Torah is placed while reading from it), as well as a cover for the Torah and a whole Torah. They were also generous with their donations to the State of Israel, and even before it became a state. They purchased "Trees" and Israel Bonds, plus a trip to Israel. At the same time, both were also donating freely to many civic charities, locally and county-wide, and very often anonymously.


Susan Moskowitz-Grand

Harry and Irene had three children. The oldest, Susan Moskowitz-Grand, was born April 13, 1945. She was very popular in Dewey School as well as Searles. She was president of her junior class and was voted queen of the junior prom. She was also head cheerleader and was active n Girl Scouts. She and her brother had been confirmed at Temple Anshei Amunim in Pittsfield, where they had received the Jewish education , and they also studied Hebrew with Shifra Deykin in Great Barrington. Susan continued her education at Simmons College in Boston where she received her bachelor of arts degree. From Teacher's College of Columbia University, she received her master's degree and from New York University came her doctorate. She was on the faculty of Medgar Evers College of New York. After a long illness, she died September 6, 1983, at the age of 38 and was buried in the Ahavath Shalom

Cemetery. She left her daughter, Jordana (Yoheved) F.M. Grand with Irene, her mother, in Great Barrington.


Craig Moskowitz

Harry and Irene's second child, Craig Baron, Moskowitz, is a cattle dealer who owns a farm in Sheffield. He and his wife, the former Paula Heady, live with their four children, Mara Jane, Careth, Ayren and Abram Jordan.

When Craig was a young man, he was conscripted into the United States Army and fought in Vietnam.

The third and youngest Moskowitz child is Dr. Mark Sanders Moskowitz, a physician. He and his wife Barbara Ann live in Gasotonia, North Carolina, with their two children Amanda Rachel and Daniel.

Harry Moskowitz died January 21, 1983 at the age of 69 in their winter home of Hallandall, Florida. Harry and Irene had been married for 39 years. Harry was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Great Barrington.

Abraham and Mary's second child was Ruth. She also went to Searles High School for her junior and senior classes. Ruth then moved to New York City and was employed by an interior decorating establishment. On a visit to her parents in Great Barrington she met Nathan (Noah) Brickman. They were married in New York City and a short while later they returned to settle in Great Barrington.

Ruth and Nathan Brickman bought the stationery

store from his sister, Mollie Brickman-Greenfield. The store was located in the Miller Hotel on the west side of Main Street in the center of town. In time the couple enlarged the store to double its size. They ran it together for many years, later selling it and retiring to Sun City West, Arizona. They have two children, Courtney and Lauren. Both are married. Lauren and her husband Craig Bowen live in Endicott, New York.

Herbert Moskowitz -- the third child of Abraham and Mary -- entered the fifth grade at Dewey School. After graduating from Searles High School, Herbert went into the United States Armed Services for about five years. During most of these hears, he had been corresponding with Faye Samel of Pittsfield and in April 1946 they were married in Albany, New York. They settled in Great Barrington. At first Herbert joined the family business, dealing with cattle. Then he opened the Barrington Bag Company from his parents' house. Later he and Faye bought their own home on the northern end of Main Street.

In the 1950s, they bought the shoe business from Robert and Mary Cummins, which was located on the second floor of the Robbins building on the west side of Main Street. About a year later, they moved the business across the street, sharing space with Scott's Clothing. Eventually, the Moskowitzes bought out Scott's and ran the store as Herbert's Shoes.

From the time he was married, Herbert has always been interested in the Jewish life of the local community.He

always took part in the services at the Synagogue, always attended meetings of the organization, never said no when called to fill a Minyan (ten people) for special memorial prayers. For many years at various times he held the position of president or vice president of the men's group.



Herbert and Faye Moskowitz

Faye also had been president of the Ladies'Aide Society. During her presidency the kitchen at the Synagogue was remodeled and re-equipped with new sets of dishes. She was also one of the original group that formed the local Hadassah chapter, and later became a life member.

Herbert and Faye have two children. A son Steven is married and owns an automobile agency in Indiana. A daughter Elaine lives in Pennsylvania Valley, Pennsylvania. She is a graduate nurse with a bachelor's degree from Boston University and a master's degree in nursing from the



Elaine Moskowitz



Steven Moskowitz

University of California. She is married to a physician, Dr. Brian Strom. They have a son Jordan and a daughter Sheyna.

Herbert also belongs to local civic organizations, among them the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. He is a past president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and a past president of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. He is a member of the Masons and is a Shriner. After working together for thirty years at Herbert's Shoes, Herbert and Faye sold their business to enjoy their home which they had built on Highland Drive about twenty years earlier. During Herbert's vice presidency of the Synagogue, Rabbi Axelrod was presented at a gala affair a special citation for having served the community for fifty years.

Frances Moskowitz, the youngest child of Abraham and Mary, met Robert Freedman at a function for youth in



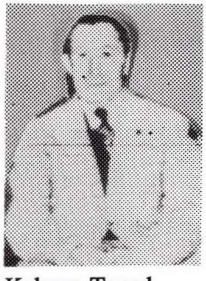
Members of the Moskowitz family are, front, Susan Moskowitz, Lauren Brickman, Steve Moskowitz, Courtney Brickman and Craig Moskowitz; second row, Herbert Moskowitz, Mary (Weinstein) Moskowitz, Abraham Moskowitz with Elaine on his knee, Harry Moskowitz; standing, Irene Moskowitz, Ruth Moskowitz Brickman, Nathan Brickman, Frances Moskowitz and Faye Moskowitz.

the Pittsfield Jewish Center. They were married in New York City and lived in Pittsfield. He is a graduate lawyer and an engineer at General Electric. Two years later, the company sent him to Schenectady and later to Fairfield, Connecticut, where they now reside.

Frances and Robert have two boys, Lowell Allen and Douglas, and two girls, Audrey and Carol. Abraham and Mary Moskowitz lived to a ripe age and enjoyed seeing their children flourish in the local Jewish community. Abraham died of a stroke at the age of 69 and was buried in the Great Barrington Jewish cemetery. Mary became ill ten years later and died. She was buried next to her husband. In memory of his father, Harry and Irene gave a Torah to the Synagogue.

Fine Tailor, Devout Member Of The Synagogue

As in many other cases in the United States, the Tessel family was attracted to Great Barrington by relatives. Eva Tessel's sister, Mrs. Secunda, had lived in Pittsfield since the early days of the century. Thus in the early 1930s, after Kalman Tessel had volunteered and finished his service with the Army, came with his wife Eva and their family to Great Barrington. At first they lived on Bridge Street, near the center of town, while Kalman opened a tailoring shop on the second floor of a Main Street buildilng, facing Railroad Street. In this location he was known for his tailoring of suits for women as well as for men. This was his specialty, he explained, because he had learned his occupation in the "Old Country." Somewhat later, the Tessels were able to buy their own home on Prospect Street where they lived until they retired.



Kalman Tessel

In the Synagogue, Kalman was an admirer of Max Gans, especially in everything pertaining to Jewish customs and ceremonies. On the High Holidays, when Rabbi Axelrod came to the prayer "Va-a-nach-noo Kor-im," both Max and

Kalman were the ones chosen to lift up the Rabbi from his position of prostration, supporting him in his prayer by holding on to his two arms.

In the years after the children graduated from Searles High School, their daughter Marion continued her education in college. She then married and now lives in California. Their son Milton went to the Boston area to further his studies. By then, the mother, Eva, spent most of her time helping Kalman in his tailoring. In the 1970s both of them retired. They sold their home and moved to Florida.

A few years later Kalman became ill and passed away. He was buried in the Jewish Cemetery of Great Barrington, and Eva moved to Boston to live with Milton.

A Socially Active Family

As the number of young Jewish families grew in the mid-thirties, Dr. Robert Cummins and his wife Mary moved into Great Barrington from the Boston area. Here second-generation Americans settled, and expanding the social and civic involvement of this young crowd. Dr. Cummins' parents, Isaac (Yitshak) and Bertha (Braha), had come from Russia early in the century, finding their way after Ellis Island to Chelsea, Massachusetts, where Robert was born. Later, with many other Jewish families, they moved to the suburb of Dorchester, but when Robert was still a young boy, his father became ill and died. Bertha remarried, to Louis Sussman. Robert received his education in the local schools and continued his studies in the field of podiatry.



Mary (Goldman) Cummins

While in high school, he met Mary Goldman, they courted and eventually married. Mary's parents were Hyman (Hayim) from Russia and his wife Annie, who had come from Austria. The Goldmans lived in Dorchester with their three children, George, Mary and Mac.

After receiving his diploma in podiatry, Robert took the advice of his mother and decided to come to Western Massachusetts and to open an office here. Louis Sussman had now retired from business and the Sussmans had moved to Pittsfield, where some of Bertha's uncles and cousins lived. Robert and Mary liked the idea of living in Great Barrington and moved here, renting an apartment in the home of Roz and Helen LaFontana on Castle Hill Avenue. Robert opened his office on the second floor of the Mahaiwe Building on the corner of Main and Castle Streets, and here he maintained his office and successful podiatry practice for the rest of his life.

Both Dr. Cummins and his wife were always lively members of the growing group of members in the Jewish community, above and beyond their membership in the local Synagogue. Both also befriended people of all faiths, and Robert took part as well in the political and social life of the townspeople. he became a Mason and a Shriner. He joined the Rotary club and was a member of the Civil Defense. He also found time to teach skiing and to attend all town meetings.

In the Jewish community he took an active part in the developments of the Synagogue, working painstakingly on plans for renovations of the building and aiming to emphasize the education of the children. He was the president of Love of Peace Synagogue for five years, from 1964-69, and was instrumental in hiring the student-Rabbi, Harry Z. Sky. It was at that time that official Hebrew classes

were held weekly in the Synagogue, as well as a confirmation class for boys and girls aged twelve to fourteen.

Mary Cummins was also involved in the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society. She served as secretary of that organization and initiated several fund-raising projects, such as sales of baked goods and clothing, to help the finances of the Men's Society. Mary was also one of the original members of the local Hadassah chapter. In other civic affairs she was a member of the women's Thursday Morning Club, a member of the Fairview Hospital Auxiliary and the local Red Cross Chapter. In 1952, when their son was eleven years old, Mary opened a shoe store on the second floor of the Robbins Building located on the corner of Main and Railroad Streets. Later she sold it to Herbert and Faye Moskowitz.

The Cummins' son William, born in 1941, went to the local Bryant School and Searles High School. He was a Boy Scout and was a pupil in the Hebrew classes. William (Billy) studied for his Bar Mitzvah celebration under the guidance of Rabbi Axelrod. After graduating from Searles, he continued his education in the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston, and thereafter worked as a pharmacist for three years. After that he became representative of the Squibb Company to various hospitals and then was promoted to vice president of the Squibb-NOVO Sales and Research, a position requiring extensive travel to European countries. Now, after his last promotion, William Cummins

is president of that firm. His office is located in Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1964 he married Susan Shapiro of Newton, Massachusetts. They have two children, David, a student in college in Connecticut, and Michelle, a student in high school in their home town Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania.

Early in 1970, Dr. Robert Cummins suddenly became ill and died. He was buried in West Roxbury in a family plot. His wife Mary soon after left Great Barrington and moved to Sharon, Massachusetts, to be closer to where William's family was at the time. She is working in a specialty shop three days a week and reported that she hopes to rejoin the local Hadassah chapter. Her energetic attitude is characteristic of her present outlook and of her past participation in the affairs of Great Barrington.

Yiddish Songs Are Sung In Great Barrington

By 1950, the early settlers of Great Barrington's Jewish community were established and for a period there were no more newcomers. Then in February of that year, another young couple arrived, Irene and Sam Linder, and their two children, Ronald and Michelle. The Linders soon bought a house with chicken coops on Division Street.



Sam Linder and his station wagon

Although both Sam and Irene were born in New York City, their parents had come from Eastern Europe. Irene's family story, as we trace it backward, offers two

variations on other tales we have heard in our vignettes concerning European Jews and their arrival in the new country. Irene's father in Russia had shared with his copatriots the prevalent socialist ideals of that time and place, and he in fact continued in America to uphold those original ideas. Irene's mother, too, had felt very much at home in the old coutnry. Nevertheless both made their way to America, there to marry and found a new family.

Irene's father, Rubin Krasner, came from Minsk (Guffa), the capital city of White Russia. Born in 1895 to a poor family, Rubin as a ten-year-old was sent by his father to assist a tailor, learn the trade and earn a living. It was then that many of the youth in Russia's larger cities became imbued with national revolutionary fervor, and Rubin was one of them. But when he discovered that even at that time he was not considered a rebel, but was about to be taken into the Czar's army, he simply left the country at the age of eighteen and, together with other emigrants departed for the United States. In America, he joined the masses of Yiddish-speaking workers with Socialistic ideals, and became a founding member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and served as an active leader. A few years later he met Rose Lifshitz.

Rose was born in the little Polish town of Haradish. She came from a family of middle income. Her father, a builder, had many people in his employ and since the family lived



Rose Lifshitz Linder

in comfortable conditions, they did not consider leaving the town at that time. Her family was religious and her father tried to keep her from going by saying that there she might have to work on Shabos (Sabbath). But when Lifshitz couldn't dissuade her, he had to agree to let his daughter go. At the age of sixteen Rose sailed for New York City.

It was but a few years later that Rubin and Rose were married, on March 18, 1919, in New York. Since Rubin wanted his daughters Irene and Hilda to learn about the Jewish culture through the Yiddish language, they were enrolled in the Yiddish schools of new York and kept it up until they finished high school. Half of each school day was devoted to programs of the public English schools and the other half was spent in Yiddish language. Here they studied Jewish history, Jewish customs, Yiddish language and grammar, Yiddish literature including such authors as Y.L. Peretz, Shalom Aleichem and Mendele Mocher Sfarim and learned Yiddish songs and had a choral group. These students referred to Hebrew only when the Yiddish words were based on their Hebrew origin.

In 1938, when Irene Krasner was seventeen and had just graduated from high school. there were many clubs for young Jewish people. In one of those clubs, Irene met Sam Linder, who was then twenty years old, and after about two years of courtship, the two were married on June 15, 1940. Sam was working then in his father's shop, manufacturing

ladies' fur coats. Ten years later, after the couple had two children, Sam decided that he didn't want to continue this kind of living, and instead he hoped to live as a farmer in a small town. Through some friends, he learned about a chicken farm with a house on Division Street in Great Barrington.

So on February 25, 1950, the Linder family moved lock, stock and barrel in to the cold winter -- at below zero temperatures through the whole winter -- to this distant New England town. Ronald and Michelle, like all the town's youngsters, went to school on the bus at about seven in the morning and came back home after three o'clock in the afternoon. That is when Irene sought and found a job as the personal secretary of Mrs. Thomas Blodgett. (She was the mother of Elizabeth Hall who founded Simon's Rock Early College.) Irene enjoyed her work and recalled that Mrs. Blodgett would introduce her to her social set as "My friend Irene." Irene stopped her job when her youngest child Barry was born on September 28, 1956 at Pittsfield General Hospital.

After three years of chicken farming, Sam became discouraged. But although Irene recommended going back to New York City, Sam preferred to stay on and found employment as a traveling salesman which gave him more satisfaction than his other occupations. Socially he belonged as a member of the B'nai B'rith in Pittsfield, and in Great Barrington as a Mason. He was also one of the founders of the Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Squad. Irene

too was involved in social groups. She served the Jewish community by taking an active part in the local Hadassah chapter. In the middle 1950s she was elected local president. It was in this capacity that she learned about Zionism and became enthusiastic about it. Later, in the 1970s, she chose to become a life member of Hadassah. She, too, served as a member of B'nai B'rith Women, and as a member of the Jewish Home of Springfield.

After some time, Irene Linder's father and mother came to retire in Great Barrington. Rubin Krasner eventually opened a small tailor shop in town. Often at family gatherings, her sister came from Springfield to join them. At these reunions the whole family would enjoy singing together in Yiddish, remembering many old stories and lore learned in the Yiddish schools earlier in New York. In this New England town the Linders thus continued the culture of their background.

The Linder children all attended local schools. Their oldest son, Ronald, is an engineer and lives in Arizona. Michelle married Fred Harwood of a local family. Barry, after attending Monument Mountain Regional High School and serving as class valedictorian, went on to medical school. He is now an intern at the St. Louis Hospital in Missouri. As part of his research work, he counts that which he did for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration with Dr. Thornton in Houston, Texas, as worthy of mention.



The Linder family singing Yiddish songs learned years before in New York.

A New Family Arrives, An Influential Clan Develops

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Jews in Europe experienced a great surge of anti-Semitism. They suffered especially in Russia, and there were a number of pogroms (organized massacres of the Jews and the destruction of their properties), with the sanction of the Russian government. This caused the mass migration of many Jews into the United States until the American quota system for immigrants was established in the early 1920s. Usually, when the immigrants passed through the gates of Ellis Island, they settled first in New York City. But later, as soon as possible, many moved into the neighboring states, seeking better accommodations, and increased opportunities for business health and happiness.

One of these families, the Racklins, moved into Connecticut. There were two brothers, George and Isaac, who settled in New Britain and four sisters who lived in Thomaston, Hartford, and Canaan, Connecticut. It was Masha who married a young man named Lippman and settled in Thomston. Minnie married a Case, and she and her sister Yudis (Shapiro) settled in Hardford. When Nehama

married Sam Nager, the Nagers joined the others in Hartford. Their cousin Max Milcowitz, who at first lived nearby, pushed further upstate to open his Army and Navy Clothing Store in Canaan.

Sam Nager (Nehama's husband), who also had come from New York City, was always a hardworking person as he tried to make a living by selling meats in his neighborhood. However, being a kind-hearted soul, he all too often let his customers have the meats without payments, just carrying their accounts "on the books," and eventually he had to close his shop. Meanwhile two of Sam's relatives, Ben and Helen Nager, had moved further north and lived in New Boston, a village in the Massachusetts town of Sandisfield. These relatives learned about Sam's plight. That very day, a young man, Joe Kaplan (whose parents Sam and Tillie had moved to New Marlborough) happened to drop in to the New Boston General Store to shop and visit. There he, too, learned about the Nagers. "Let them come to Great Barrington, we need a meat shop there," he said to Ben Nager. Indeed, soon after, Joe wrote to the Nagers in Hartford, urging them to make the move to this area.

The Nagers, receiving the letter, didn't wait long, and in 1922 they came "lock, stock and barrel" to Great Barrington. They were Sam and Nehama, their son Sol (Solomon) and Sol's wife Mollie (Malka). They brought all their goods and basic furniture. They found lodging in the area of North Street, where other Jews were living. There was one member of the family, however, who remained in

Hartford -- daughter Sara. She stayed at the home of Minnie Case, Nehama's sister, until Sara was able to complete her studies and graduate from the high school in Hartford.



Solomon Nager

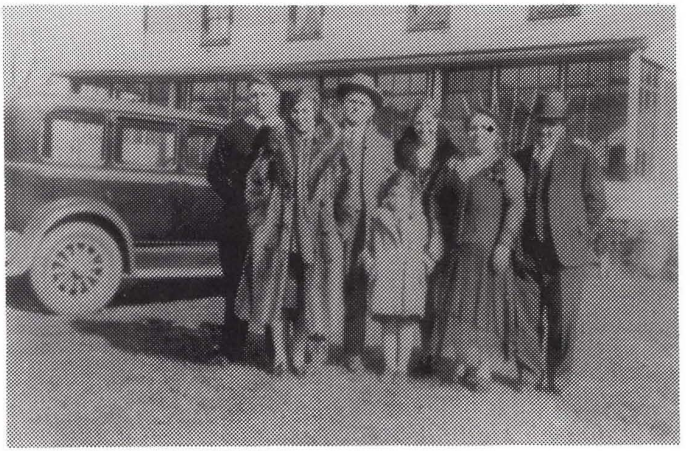
In Great Barrington, the Nagers, father and son, opened a meat shop on Main Street near the Cottage Street bridge. At first these newcomers thrived in their enterprise, but when the A&P market expanded to include meats and moved from Railroad Street to a new location nearby, the customers at Nager's dwindled.

So in 1923, the family bought a house off South Main Street, near the river, north of the fairgrounds, and started a farm of cows and chickens to sustain them while the men peddled their meats in the small towns around. A year later, on July 31, 1924, a daughter, Renee Nager, was born. Gradually they found themselves better-established and began to enjoy their new surroundings in this community.

At this same time, further developments occurred within the larger family picture, including events back in Connecticut. The results, however, had direct bearing upon this small Nager family circle in Great Barrington -- and eventually upon other members of this wider growing

community. It happened that in 1924, in New Britain, Connecticut -- as in so many other areas at that time, with the upsurge of Jewish arrivals -- a Hebrew teacher was urgently needed to fill the demands of many such towns and schools. The National Hebrew Teachers' Association in the fall of 1924 called for an assembly of representatives of schools as well as teachers who looked for jobs, to be held in the hall of the Jewish Center of Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, New York. Thus, a delegate came to this meeting from New Britain in search of a candidate for the school. He found a suitable young teacher named Albert Rapaport, hired him and brought him back to Connecticut. To accommodate this Hebrew scholar in New Britain, room and board were arranged with the local Racklin family.

Nehama Nager, Racklin's sister, who heard about



Solomon and Mollie Nager, Katriel Rapaport and his daughter Shifra, Nehama and Samuel Nager and Renee

the eligible young man, came to visit her brother. She often liked to tell the story of the day she arrived, when she saw this teacher sitting at the table and eating his meal before leaving for the Hebrew school. (The Hebrew school classes were held after the public school sessions.) She recalled that all she saw was a handsome head of wavy blonde hair, and Nehama said to her brother: "This gentleman is just the right fellow for my 'Serkeh' Sara." And she was right. On Thanksgiving 1927, Sara Nager and Albert Rapport* (the young scholar) were married in the Great Barrington Synagogue.

The Nager family, meanwhile, had eight or nine good years in their home on South Main Street, where the family worked and thrived. During this period Mr. Rapaport, Albert's father from Palestine, came to the United States, traveling to Great Barrington to meet his son's relatives. In a photo in the famly album is shown Molly Nager and Mr. Rapaport near the farmhouse. But in 1932, a fire put an end to that dwelling. The family then moved to an apartment on the second floor of a Railroad Street building, then again to Bridge Street east of the Housatonic River, and from there to 12 Mahaiwe Street, a house they then bought. They still sold meats, with a young man, Jack Penziner, to help them with the chores. Later Louis Levine assisted. They used Louis Goldberg's slaughterhouse, which remained nearby, off South Main Street near the river. From the first, it was Rabbi Axelrod who performed the ritual Kosher butchering for them there.

In 1935, the father Sam Nager took sick (a heart attack) and passed away. He was buried in Hartford. Eleven years later, Nehama Nager died in 1946 and was also buried in Hartford next to her husband.

It was in 1932-33 that Mollie Nager and Dave Liss opened their specialty shop for ladies' wear on Main Stret, just north of where Wheeler & Taylor is located today. But when it became known that the building they rented was to be removed for a larger building, they closed down this enterprise. Mollie then opened her own business on the second floor of the Robbins Building, naming it Nager's Bridal Shop, and Dave Liss went into the furniture business. Mollie kept her shop there during 1941-43.

Sol at this same period went into the furniture business. he joined with another younger family relative who had in these same years come to town. Harry Deykin, who had lived in Great Barrington as a teenager, often visiting his sister Mollie Nager and staying in their home, returned here to live with his wife and children, opening a furniture store on Railroad Street. It was this business that Dave Liss briefly joined but left for the store in Lee (see earlier account), and this then became Sol Nager's opportunity to join his brother-in-law's furniture business.

In the early 1940s, however, a major new development in foods and merchandising appeared with wide consequences for businesses and homemakers. It was proven that foods could be stored in large freezer lockers, and this was especially useful for people who wished to

store large amounts of meats bought on the wholesale scale. This new business enterprise appealed to Sol Nager, and in 1942 he opened a freezer-locker business on Railroad Street. Unfortunately for Sol, within only a few years, individual home freezers came on the market, and with this new advance, he abandoned his business, turning to real estate.



Mollie Nager
and daughter Renee

Mollie's shop, meanwhile, had moved to 309 Main Street, and she named her new enlarged and modernized store the Nagers' Fashion Center. This store with its colorful display windows became an attractive and well-known center for women's clothing purchases in town for many years, from 1943 until the early 1960s.

Solomon and Mollie Nager's daughter Renee after graduating from Searles High School received her degree as a dental hygienist from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1947 she was married to her second cousin Milton Milcowitz, whose family lived in Canaan. When Milton joined the famly business of freezer lockers, the couple lived in the apartment house that the Nagers acquired on Manville Street. Their first child Sherman was born in 1948, and Leah was born in 1951. Thereafter, Milton and Renee decided to

move to Connecticut where with the support of the Nagers they opened a men's clothing store in Wallingford. Later on, when their daughter Leah was married, her husband Richard Stancil came to work in that store, and he is now a co-owner of the Milton Men's Shop. Both Milcowitz children continued their education and received their master's degrees in education. Sherman has been teaching in Hartford and his wife, the former Susan Kaufman, who has a master's degree in child psychology, is in charge of students' tests in three secondary schools in the Windsor, Connecticut, school system. Leah became the director of the Wallingford Convalescent Home.

Mollie and Sol Nager were personally interested in the affairs of the Synagogue. Sol served on various committees and was appointed, with Max Gans and Dave Liss, to the cemetery committee. He was also in charge of collecting money for the Youth Commission and it was his action that changed the name "Love of Peace" to the Hebrew name "Ahavath Shalom" Synagogue. Mollie always helped with the sisterhood functions, and she took it upon herself to provide the fast-breaking meal traditionally served in shul at the end of Yom Kippur.,

It is interesting to note here how the family pattern of the Nagers and their relatives developed in an unusual but logically explainable way. When Harry Deykin -- Mollie Nager's brother -- married a young woman, Shifra

Rapaport, who had immigrated from Israel (Palestine), and brought their two young children to Great Barrington, he was linking two family circles in this small town. For Shifra was, in fact, the sister of the young Hebrew scholar (also from Israel) whom the older Mrs. Nager had spotted, with his wavy hair, for her daughter Sara. These families, joined by circumstances of help and care for one another in this time of Jewish expansion and enterprise, thus were all drawn to Great Barrington.

The influence and impact of this larger family settlement upon the Jewish community would be important, as we shall see in subsequent vignettes.

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* The family name is variously spelled Rapport, Rapaport and Rappaport, all phoenetic spellings of the Hebrew name.

Hebrew Teacher, Lawyer, Town Committee Member

In many Jewish communities of the United States we find that relatives are attracted to one another, meeting in out-of-the-way locations. So it was in Great Barrington, as we have seen, when Albert (Avshalom) Rapport and his wife Sara (Nager) and their son Carmi joined the rest of the Nager family in town, and likewise when Harry Deykin (Mollie's brother) and his wife Shifra joined as well the family of Shifra's brother Albert Rapport. The three families indeed lived within a block of one another on South Main Street, on Mahaiwe and Manville Streets, for many years.

As we have said, a great number of the Jews who came to America arrived here between the 1880s and the 1920s, escaping from Eastern Europe and Russia. However, Albert and Shifra had a different experience. They did not flee from hardships or anti-Semitism, but rather were drawn to this country by a desire to continue their education. Coming from fairly well-to-do circumstances at that time in their father's home in Israel (then called Palestine), they traced their ancestry also to Lita (Lithuania).

Their grandfather Hayim Tuvia Rapaport was born in the town of Slovodka, Lita, in 1837. His father was the famous Rabbi Katriel of Willkomir, Lita. Hayim Tuvia was trained in the tradition of rabbinical learning, and as was the custom then, he was married at an early age to a young woman from a family named Wolk. She died in childbirth and her son Benjamin was raised by the Wolk family, which later moved to the United States and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. Hayim Tuvia then married a second time, and his new wife gave birth to a son, Shlomo Yitzhak. She also didn't live long, and Hayim Tuvia then married a third time, Rohel-Beila, who bore him three boys, Katriel, Shmaya and Baruch. Until this point in the family's history in Europe, the story was much like that told by many others of the time, with all its troubles and joys.



Ziporah Tekulsky Rapaport



Katriel Rapaport

But in the early 1880s, when most Jewish people of their type moved to the United States, Hayim Tuvia, who was imbued with his religious upbringing, made a decision that turned his family in another direction. He took his wife and four boys and went to Jerusalem, to dwell in the Holy Land. Travelling first by boat across the Baltic Sea, and landing at the seaport of Jaffa, this small family completed its journey, arriving at Jerusalem according to plan.



Bella Rapaport Miller

Two years later, however, in 1882, Hayim Tuvia was asked to leave to serve the newly established town of Rishon-le-Zion as the first Shoket and local Rabbi. Here he also taught some of the young children in the traditional learning of Bible, Gemara* (Talmud), and the prayer book.

A few years later, Hayim Tuvia took a historic stand on a controversial issue in Israel, when he tried to institute the law of Shmita -- the sale of land to a non-Jew for farming purposes in every seventh year, the shmita.

A sad event befell Hayim Tuvia one day as he travelled from Jaffa back to Rishon. A band of Arabs attacked him, took his donkey and left him stripped and wounded by the roadside. Subsequently he became very ill. His career as a shoket ended, since he could no longer

control his hands for the job. His son Katriel then took over the responsibility of the family. Hayim Tuvia died in 1907, and was buried along with other first settlers of Palestine in that era in the Rishon-le-Zion cemetery.

Katriel Rapaport, together with his three brothers and their mother, had temporarily stayed on in Jerusalem until 1884, after Hayim Tuvia first moved to Rishon. Thus for four years Katriel had the opportunity to study the Talmud at the famous Hurvah Synagogue in the old quarter of the holy city. The remains of that synagogue are a colorful landmark in Jerusalem today. Eventually the family was reunited in Rishon when the children attended local schools. In his early twenties, Katriel married Ziporah Tekulsky, who had come from the Polish city of Bayalistock. The oldest of their twin



Yehoodith Rapaport Shiloni
and Dr. Abraham Shiloni

boys died at birth, and the second boy Yekoutiel also died in infancy. Katriel's and Ziporah's other four children were Yehudith, who was later married to Dr. Avraham Shiloni and lived in Jerusalem; Avshalom (Albert); Shifra and Bella.

Katriel became involved in the town affairs of Rishon early in life. Taking on the responsibility of town secretary, he also bought land and became a well-off farmer. He served at least four terms as mayor, including a period during the World War. He was also president of the agricultural council, served on the school committee and among other activities played an instrument in the local town band.

Katriel, interestingly, was head of the wine business in Jaffa which became the famous Carmel Wine Company of today. He came to the United States in 1922 on Carmel Wine business with a letter of recommendation from the great Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook. Several years later, again on Carmel wine business, he visited America and travelled to Great Barrington to see his family.

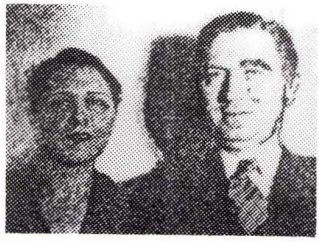
Katriel died on the twenty-first day of Heshvan in 1941, and was buried in Rishon-le-Zion, where a street is named after him.

His wife, Ziporah, survived him five years, living in the large and well known house in the center of Rishon. When she became ill, she was taken to a hospital in Jaffa and at that time expressed a wish to see her son Avshalom. Bella, her youngest daughter, wrote to Albert about it and he

immediately set out for Israel. He arrived in time. A few weeks later, Ziporah died on Kaf Av of 1946. She was buried in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives near the grave of her mother, Rochel Tekulsky.

Avshalom (Albert), who was born in 1900 on the twelfth day of Av, graduated from the local school in Rishon in 1914, just as the First World War broke out. When the Turkish government caused a great deal of trouble to the Jews in Jaffa and Tel Aviv, the local high schools were not available. Katriel thus took Avshalom to the Hebrew Gimnassia in Jerusalem, but two years later, when the British arrived, that school also became unavailable. So, Avshalom then was forced to continue his education at the Hebrew Reali school in Haifa. He excelled in math and he hoped to follow that inclination by becoming an engineer. No one, however, could leave Palestine in those days, not until 1919 when the war ended. Avshalom decided to continue his education in the United States where he could both earn money by teaching Hebrew school in the afternoon and pursue his studies in the mornings.

While in New York City, Avshalom met some cousins of his mother's family, the Tekulskys and the Finkelsteins of Jersey



Albert and Sara (Nager) Rapport


Avshalom Albert Rapport

City, New Jersey. It was George Finkelstein who recommended that Avshalom adopt an American first name, Albert.

From there Albert went to Cincinnati, Ohio, to meet the cousins of the Benjamin Wolk family, who then advised Albert to enter the University of Pittsburg and to teach Hebrew nearby in the afternoon.

From the life of the Jews at that time, Albert realized that the field of engineering would not be fully open to him, so he decided to switch to law. In order to prepare for this study he moved to Buffalo. Again a bit of chance intervened and Albert was dismayed to discover, after finishing the first year, that Buffalo Law School had suddenly decided to switch its school hours to the afternoon. The other law students thus could apprentice in lawyers' offices during the mornings. But for Albert this switch was most unfortunate. He was now left without an income, since Hebrew school was always taught in after-school hours. So he decided to take a year off from school and to look for a job in a city with better pay.

That was the year the convention of Hebrew teachers and school representatives of the area was called, to be held

in the Jewish Center in Brooklyn. At the convention, Albert was hired to teach in New Britain for 1924-25. That job led him to meet his future wife, Sara Rapport (as told in the Nager story, earlier).

The following year, Albert was back in Buffalo Law School. After receiving his diploma, he served his apprenticeship in New York City. On Thanksgiving 1927, Albert and Sara went to Great Barrington to be married in the Love of Peace Synagogue. They lived in New York City where Albert worked in a law office and Sara worked in a dress shop.

In 1930 when the Carmel Wine Company reorganized its business in the United States, Albert Rapport was named assistant to the United States representative.

A few years later, a son was born to the couple and they named him Carmi. In 1937 the young family moved to Hudson, New York, where Albert opened his legal office at 711 Warren Street. Sara opened a dress shop named the Specialty Shop. Carmi entered the first grade.

After a few years, however, the family bought a home in Great Barrington, and Albert continued to commute daily to his office in Hudson. He made many friends and contacts in Great Barrington, taking an active part in town affairs. He was soon elected secretary of the town Finance Committee.

Sara joined Mollie Nager, working in the latter's dress shop. Albert and Sara both took an active part in the

Affairs of the Jewish community. Albert became the secretary of the men's organization of the Love of Peace Synagogue. And Sara served as vice president of Hadassah. At this time, Albert worked closely with Robert Cummins (then president) in developing and planning for the future of the synagogue. Later Albert became the financial secretary when Irving Steinberg took over the job of secretary. In 1950, Albert promoted the idea of a memorial plaque in the synagogue for the names of deceased members. This project did not materialize until a few years later when George Slaminsky offered to pay for the initial cost, in memory of his parents, and Herbert Moskowitz was chairman of that committee.

An important problem faced the Jewish community for a number of years. Up to that time, Jewish people who died here were sent out of town for burial. The uncertainty of where the deceased may be buried made matters doubly unhappy for those who survived. For a number of years, a committee consisting of Max Gans, Dave Liss and Solomon Nager studied the situation. Now Albert Rapport was appointed to be in charge of that committee. It took a great deal of research and a number of meetings with representatives of Elmwood Cemetery. Finally, on February 4, 1951, Albert announced to the Synagogue meeting that the cemetery issue would be put on the agenda for the next town meeting.

The town records report as follows: "At the town

meeting of February 19, 1951, Article 37, a motion of Mr. Albert Rapport, it was voted that the town set aside all those certain tracts or parcels of land, shown and designated on the map of Elmwood Cemetery, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, as Block numbers 105, 106, 113, 114, 121, and 122, to be used as burial grounds exclusively and solely for the interment of deceased persons of the Jewish faith."

In 1952 Sara and Albert Rapport celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary and part of their celebration included a trip to Israel. There they bought a sterling silver torah pointer, which they donated to the Great Barringotn Synagogue. Some time later, they also donated their piano to the Synagogue's social hall. On February 7, 1954, Albert was commissioned by meeting to change the name of the synagogue from Love of Peace to its Hebrew equivalent Ahavath Shalom officially and legally.



Carmi Rapport

That year Albert and Sara were planning to build a home in nearby Claverack, New York, on a hill overlooking vast fields. But Sara took sick and on July 16, 1955, she died. She was buried in the Great Barrington Jewish cemetery. Albert completed the house and lived there alone for the rest of his life.

Their son Carmi, often at the head of his class in Searles High School, later graduated from Yale College. He served in Korea during the Korean War and upon returning from military service studied at Columbia Law School. While in New York City, he met Marilyn Levitt and they were married there on December 23, 1956.

After graduation from Columbia, they moved to Hudson, New York, where Carmi entered his father's law



Carmi and Marilyn Rapport with children Seth, Daniel, and Sara Ann

office and Lynne later taught in the local grade schools. Carmi thereafter also took part in city politics and in the local Synagogue. The couple have three children, Sara Ann, Seth and Daniel. All three graduated as valedictorians from Hudson High School before entering Yale and Harvard.

When Albert lived in Claverack, he took an active part in the Synagogue and the Jewish community of nearby Hudson. On January 17, 1973 (on Tu B'Shivat), he suffered a heart attack while at a Hudson synagogue meeting and died instantly. He was buried next to his wife Sara in the Great Barrington Jewish cemetery.

A Sabra And A Yankee Come To Town

It is time now for the author, Shifra Rapaport Deykin, to tell my own part in these events of the Great Barrington Jewish community with extra details about our own family.

When Harry and I came to town we were in our early thirties and our children were Daniel, four and a half years old, and Sharon, two months. We came from New York City, where Harry had first earned his livelihood by selling furniture at Macy's department store. Harry and I were not strangers in Great Barrington, for we had met here during the middle 1920s at the home of the Nagers. Harry was Mollie Nager's brother and I was the sister of Albert Rapport, whose wife was the former Sara Nager. Harry and I were married in the Bronx, New York, in 1929 on Thanksgiving Day, with the Nagers and Rapports attending.

While working at Macy's, Harry learned a great deal about furniture in the store's special course for personnel. He continued his general education during after-store hours at Columbia University. But even before that, he had acquired his rich vocabulary from continually delving into his prized early possession -- a Webster's unabridged dictionary. Words, literature, songs and poetry were always

a delight for Harry and he loved often to recite verses to his children and later on his grandchildren.

Harry's parents, Hayim-Leib and Rebecca, like so many others, had run away from Russia early in this century, bringing with them their two little daughters Malka (Mollie) and Masha (Mary). The family first settled in New York City where Hershel (Harry) was born. They then moved to Connecticut, where Hayim-Leib earned his living from house painting. After their fourth child Michl (Mike) was born, however, the young mother died. Hayim-Leib then married a widow with her own three orphans, a daughter and two sons. As a result of this marriage, a son was born, named Lippe (Leonard).

When Harry later moved to New York City to broaden his horizons and further his education in night school, we soon met and were married.

I was born in the town of Rishon-le-Zion in Palestine. After graduating from grammar school, I entered the Teachers' Training School in Jaffa, located in the section called Neve Tsedek. In the year 1923, a year after graduating with special distinction, I left for the United States in search of higher education, as my brother Albert had done a few years earlier. At my aunt's family (Lena Tekulsky-Finkelstein of New Jersey), I was advised to spend a year in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where some relatives lived. There I would be able to teach Hebrew in the afternoons while studying English and American history during the



Shifra Rapaport's certificate from Hebrew Teachers School

mornings in a private high school for girls. One year later, I came to New York City . There I taught Hebrew in the Brooklyn Jewish Center on Eastern Parkway and enrolled in the school of education at New York University. In June 1927, I received from that school my bachelor of science degree in education. I continued my studies at Columbia University.



Harry Deykin receiving award



Danny, Shifra, Harry and Sharon Deykin

Three years after we were married, Harry and I were blessed with our son Daniel, who was born October 29, 1932. It was at this time that we made a decision that we thought would be momentous. Responding to the plea of my family in Israel, with the prospect of a good job for Harry in the vineyards, we packed all our belongings, selling nearly everthing we owned (except for certain favorite books), and set sail on a steamboat in the reverse direction--across the Atlantic to Jaffa, Israel. We settled with our family into comfortable quarters in my parents' house located on Ein Hakore Street in the early 1930s, in the town of Rishon-le-Zion. However, both Harry and little Danny didn't fare well in this drastic

change of their lives. At the prescription of Dr. Avraham Shiloni (my older sister Yehudith's husband of Jerusalem), Danny's only digestible food was boiled rice. Harry, too, couldn't adjust to the many physical differences.

Harry decided to go back to New York City. A few months later, when he would have earned enough money for new furniture, Danny and I were to join him. We stayed in Riverdale for a few more years and were blessed again when our daughter Sharon was born. At that time, Albert and Sara Rapport and their son Carmi moved away from New York City to Hudson, New York, so Harry and I also decided to move closer to the rest of our relatives who were living upstate and in New England.

In his furniture business, located on Great Barrington's Railroad Street, Harry met many new people in the area. He encouraged them to buy on the installment plan by paying as little as a dollar a week and not wait until they had cash for the full price.

One evening Harry said to me, "Shifra, it has been snowing for a few weeks, and some of my customers in the outlying town of New Marlborough probably haven't been able to come to pay their bills. So I will go see them there."

About an hour later, he returned, saying this time, "Shifra, please collect some of our children's clothes, whatever we can spare, so I can take them over to our customers, the Horners. Their house was so cold, and the children had no sweaters, and they all looked so very

hungry, that I took out the few dollars I had in my pocket and gave them to the mother to buy some food tomorrow."

Another story tells us about Harry and his relations with his customers. One morning when his secretrary was reviewing with him some delinquent accounts, they came to the name of a person working as a farmhand in a nearby town in New York state.

"Look, said Marion (the secretary), "Mr. Miller owes you now close to two hundred dollars, and he even stopped buying cooking gas from you. Why don't you let me write to him a stiff letter?"

"Don't worry, Marion, when he will have it, he will pay." Just then Miller appeared at the doorway. "You see," whispered Harry. "Harry," said Miller, "I haven't been coming to your store because I couldn't pay, simply because I didn't have the money. I still don't have it. But my boss-farmer is ready to sell his farm, and he is giving me the first chance to buy it. I don't know any person in the whole world who would lend me the needed few thousand dollars. So, Harry, I am coming here to you." After a short silence, Harry said, "Come back this afternoon and you will have my answer." "Are you crazy?" said Marion after Miller had gone. "Well, I'll talk to my wife at lunch time."

At home, Harry told me the story and I answered, "In our Jewish history we learn about our greatest thinker Maimonides (Moses, son of Maimon), who lived in the twelfth century (1135-1204). He taught us that the greatest

Mitzvah (good deed) a man can do is not just to give a gift of money outright so as to clear one's conscience, but to put the poor person in a position of being on his own, without depending on others."

"Harry," I added, "if you didn't want to help Mr. Miller, you wouldn't have come to hear what I had to say in the matter. But, where will you get that money?" "I'll go to the bank with Miller and both of us will sign a note."

Harry was respected and well-liked by people in the three-states area, Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut. As time went on, he was elected to the board of directors of the new local branch of the Berkshire Bank and later was elected to the board of Custom Extrusion, a plastics company in Sheffield. Through the years, many people sought him out for advice and other kinds of personal and professional help. He was, over the years, respected by the town representatives for his public service of all kinds, and was chosen by the Selectmen to serve on the first board of the Council on Aging, a position he energetically filled from 1979 until 1981. Claire Teague, in fact, recalled that two days before his death, Harry was at the Senior Center, checking the equipment, earnestly involved in aiding others.

Three years of living in rented houses made us decide that we should buy a home of our own in town. In 1940, after examining many places, we bought the large house located at the corner of South Main Street and Pope Street, known for years as Wainwright Hall.



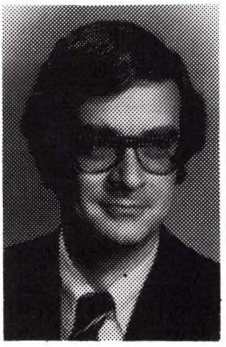
Wainwright Hall

This house was originally built as an inn in 1766 by an early settler named Peter Ingersoll, who owned a lot of land in the area. The hill across the street on the east side of Route 7 was named after him -- Mount Peter (also commonly called Mount Petra). When building the house, Ingersoll placed some bricks to spell out "P.I. 1766." They are still there, on the second floor, facing the highway.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the house belonged to David Wainwright, a selectman in town. One Wainwright son-in-law, Leonard Franklin Pope, was an inventor in the field of electricity. He remodeled the small

square house into a three-story house in the years 1889-91. He added the whole rear with a third floor and kept a special area for scientific experiments. In this house other great scientists, including Thomas A. Edison and Alfred Steinmetz, participated in experiments. Pope named the house Wainwright Hall, to honor his father-in-law, and the side street is named Pope Street, in his honor.

When the architectural writer Russell Lynes published his book, "The Tastemakers," in 1949, he classified the house as "built in the Queen Anne manner." But back at the time we bought it, it had fallen into disrepair and was in the hands of the local banks. Once we moved in in 1940 we began renovations as best we could then afford. Our two children Daniel and Sharon went to the local public schools and after finishing Searles High School Dan entered Harvard.



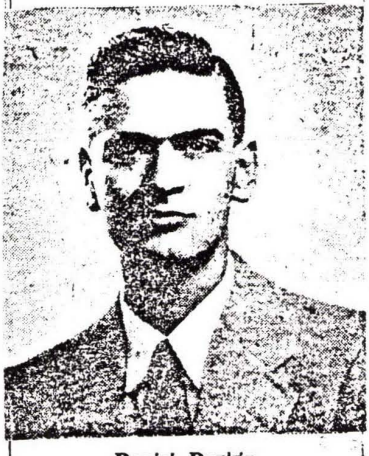
Daniel Deykin



Eva Deykin

In medical school, Daniel met his future wife, Eva Yona. They were married in Temple Beth El in Belmont, Massachusetts, December 23, 1955. Eva was the daughter of the engineer, David Yona, and his wife, Anna Foa Yona,

Deykin Graduates With Top Honors From Harvard



Daniel Deykin

GREAT BARRINGTON — Daniel Deykin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Deykin of Main Street graduated summa cum laude Thursday from Harvard University, receiving several additional honors for scholastic excellence.

He was a recipient of the John Harvard and the Harvard College honorary scholarships and the Detour award. His thesis, "Walter Lippmann, a Study of Self-Defeating Intelligence," took the Francis Bowen award, and he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Daniel majored in American history and literature, receiving an A.B. degree.

On the extra curricular side, he was cochairman of the student council on exchange students, treasurer of the Lowell House Musical Society, a member of the Phillips Brooks House and the Hasty Pudding Club.

In the class of 1949 at Searles, Daniel graduated from the local high school with highest honors, and was class valedictorian. He has been accepted for entry at Harvard Medical School in Boston this fal[l]

From Berkshire Eagle May 27, 1952

who taught Italian in the Boston Conservatory of Music. The Yona family had come from Italy to America in 1934, with their daughters Eva and Manuela, to escape from the Mussolini regime. Anna Yona's grandfather was the Rabbi Joseppe Foa in the city of Turin in Northern Italy. Eva graduated from Radcliffe College and received her master's degree in social work from Simmons College and her doctoral degree in public health from Harvard University, where she is now teaching. Daniel and Eva have three children, Aaron (Tuvia) in his senior year at Dartmouth College; Lelia (Tsipora) in Colorado Springs College; and Carla (Rivka), who graduated from Brookline High.



Daniel and Eva Deykin and their children Aaron, Lelia and Carla

Our daughter, Sharon, was born in New York City and was only two months old when we moved to Great Barrington. At the age of three, when we moved to South Main Street, she enjoyed meeting all the neighbors who lived near us -- the older people during the day and the children who would play in our backyard after school hours.

At the age of five she went with me to study at Miss Mill's School. Then, she began to take piano lessons from Mrs. Roder, who came weekly from Julliard School in New York to the local private girls' school at the Searles mansion. After that, Sharon continued to take piano lessons from Charlotte Homer all through grammar school and high school.

At an early age, she played a concert in our home to an audience of about forty guests. A year later, in 1953, when The Berkshire Eagle together with the new radio

Young Pianist Gives Recital

GREAT BARRINGTON — Forty persons attended a piano recital by Miss Sharon Deykin, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Deykin of South Main Stret, at her home Sunday.

A sophomore at Searles High School, Miss Deykin is studying piano under Miss Charlotte Homer of South Egremont.

The program, which included an original composition by Miss Deykin entitled "Minuet," follows:

Prelude and Fugue ..... Bach
Sonata in F major-Allegro .... Beethoven
Impromptu ..... Schubert
Polonaise ..... Chopin
Fantasie Impromptu ..... Chopin

Intermission.

Brownies ..... Korngold
Minuet ..... S. Deykin
Etude Melodique ..... Rogers
Scaramouche ..... Mowrey



Sharon Deykin

From Berkshire Eagle
June 15, 1953

station were sponsoring a musical contest for the high schools in the county, Sharon received first prize and a hundred dollar cash award as top musician.

After graduating from Searles High School, Sharon entered Radcliffe College and graduated cum laude. There, she majored in American history and literature and at graduation received the Helen Choate Bell Award for literature. This included a cash gift of five hundred dollars. Later, Sharon received her master's degree "with distinction" from Columbia University and her doctorate in philosophy from the University of Bar-Ilan, where she now teaches literature.

During Sharon's third year in college, she met an honors student at Harvard Law School. They were married on Labor Day weekend in 1957. her husband, Paul, is the son of Alexander and Sylvia Baris of New York City. Paul practiced law on Wall Street for about thirteen years; then the couple decided to move their young family to Israel. They live now outside the city of Tel Aviv, in a suburb, Ramat Chen. Paul is a professor of law at Bar-Ilan University and is also a member of a Tel Aviv law firm.

Sharon and Paul have four children, Michael, Joel-Katriel, Ezra-David and Jessica-Isca. All three boys went through an Army training in conjunction with continued religious studies. Michael and his wife, the former Ada-



Sharon and Paul Barris



Paul and Sharon Barris are seated in front with grandson Harel. Standing are Jessica, Ezra, Joel, Michael and Elkana and Ada-Nadia.

Neria, and their two sons, Harel and Elkana, live in Jerusalem. Michael is teaching full-time. Joel is a leader in the youth movement. Ezra is not yet finished with his Army training and Jessica is entering her senior year in a girls' high school in Tel Aviv.

In 1942, when both Sharon and Daniel were ready to go to school, I thought about starting to teach. I went to Kenneth Preston, the superintendent of schools, but he said he must adhere to local rule that they could not engage teachers who were married women. Years later, when that rule no longer prevailed, Preston came to me during the year 1952-53 and asked me whether I would consider teaching mathematics in Searles High School. I accepted.

At the beginning of the first lesson in the freshman class, when I just turned my head to the blackboard, a large eraser was thrown across the room. In a low tone I calmly said, "Please, go fetch the eraser, place it at the blackboard where it belongs, and then come here. Now, what is your name?"

"Henry," was the sheepish reply.

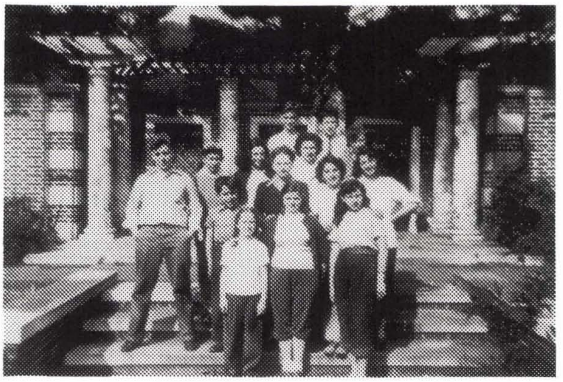
"Listen to me, Henry," I said. "I am not going to tell anything about this to the school superintendent, Kenneth Preston, nor to Frank Coughlin, the principal of Searles. And I am not going to say a word to your parents. But, I shall *never* have to talk like this to you either. Now, sit back on your seat."

But before my public school teaching, when I

couldn't be hired in the high school, I went to Miss Mills, the head teacher of the private grammar school called Taconic School, located then on Bridge Street. Miss Mills engaged my services, and our daughter Sharon was accepted there in the primary grade. But a few years later, because of the war, the school was closed, and now I can recall only one of my pupils at that school, Mimi Logan, now Mrs. Angus MacDonald. In subsequent years, I went on to teach math and biology at the Barrington School for Girls.

In the summer of 1946, when conditions were dangerous for the Jews in Palestine, there lived in the neighboring town of Monterey some summer residents named David and Ella Wohl. Ella was then on the national board of Hadassah, the American women's Zionist organization. Through her inspiration, we were encouraged to form a new Hadassah chapter in the area.

When a meeting was called at my house about fifteen local Jewish women attended. I was elected first president. The chapter was originally part of the Upper New York State Region, and at a meeting in Rochester, New York, where our members together with the members from Pittsfield's chapter attended, I was appointed by the regional president, Julia Berlove, to be regional bulletin chairman. Two years later, in 1951, the geographic boundaries of a new region were formed, now to be called the Western New England Region. Our chapter and that of Pittsfield thus shifted to the new region, and in 1960 I was elected its fourth regional president.



A Young Judea picnic at Brookside in 1947. Shown are, bottom, Sharon Deykin and guest Myrna Sossner; second row, Bobby Chesanow, Shifra Deykin and guest Betty Karp; third row, Carmi Rapport, David Axelrod, Lois Gans, Eddie Axelrod and Rosie Axelrod; rear, guest Danny Deykin

As part of my local Jewish activities I especially enjoyed my work with the younger generation in town. Under my leadership a Young Judea group was formed. Meetings were held in various houses and members attended conclaves held in nearby communities. One colorful picnic remains vivid in my mind, as many of the children of families whose histories we've followed joined in.

Meanwhile in my own teaching career, I combined serving both the public schools and the Jewish community. In 1948, I was first hired to teach in Pittsfield in the after-school program of Hebrew studies. I taught Hebrew language, grammar and Jewish history in various classes at the Hebrew School there for fifteen years. It was during the last few years that I taught some classes using a set of

pamphlets which I composed and produced on a duplicating system. On November 10, 1963, at a special dinner, I was presented a framed certificate of service awarded by the committee and my former students.

I was also very involved in local Jewish community projects. One year that was especially memorable for me all of the local members of Hadassah and the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society worked together collecting recipes from many local people (with permission to substitute the Kosher ingredients when necessary) for a cookbook. We also sold ads to be printed in the book in order to cover the price of printing. Mother's Way Cookbook came out in 1966. The



At the Hadassah luncheon in August 1953 were Ruth Slaminsky, Freda Schocket, Alice Bressaf, Sally Penziner, Erma Raflowitz, guest Rosalind (Rossie) Levine, Mrs. Goldstein of Housatonic, Fay Budner, Marsha Zittman, Rose Vagenheim, Shifra Deykin, Milly Pevzner, June Katch, Irene Linder, Betty Raflowitz and Bella Axelrod

proceeds were given to both Jewish organizations and the sum amounted to about two thousand dollars each. When we gathered in my back yard to introduce this book, it seemed as if two histories in one town joined that day, as we noted that it was the two hundredth anniversary of the man who built our home in 1766, Peter Ingersoll.

An interesting incident in my life relates to still another teaching job which I held, within our area, for a short time. In 1967, when the Jewish community in Hudson, New York, was without a rabbi and its Hebrew school had no head teacher, my brother Albert Rapport, who had his law office in Hudson, suggested that I teach for at least that year. I was hired both to teach and to run the educational programs of the whole school, a job which I filled for a two-year period. One summer, some years later, I received two guests from Hudson, Rose Miller and her daughter Lynn. They came to tell me that when Lynn had been in my Hebrew class, she had been fascinated by her studies and had thereafter continued to take courses in Hebrew during her four years of college. She carried with her the spark I had instilled in my students to go to Israel on Aliyah (pioneering). So it turned out that she came now to thank me for my influence and to say goodbye to me. She was married in Israel and lives now with her husband and children in the northern city of Kiryat Shmona. What is especially remarkable in her story is the recent added sequel. When Myrna Enker, the wife of Professor Enker of Bar-Ilan University, was conducting a discussion group for

Americans on Aliyah, she asked one of the young ladies, "Tell me, Barbara, your name is now Mrs. White. But your maiden name was Barbara Zelner. What made you decide on Aliyah?"

"A Hebrew teacher, back in my home town, Hudson, New York," was the reply. "And what was her name?" "You probably never heard of her. She is called Mrs. Deykin." "Why, she is the mother of my best friend, Dr. Sharon Deykin Baris, who teaches now at Bar-Ilan Universtiy," responded Mrs. Enker in delight, and in amazement at our small Jewish world.

During the years that I taught in Great Barrington, Pittsfield and Hudson, I served also on various committees of non-Jewish organizations such as the Red Cross, where I was secretary. I served also as chairman of the local Heart



Leadership of the Southern Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association in 1961: Mrs. Hoyt, first vice president; Miss Cornwell, supervisor; Mrs. Deykin, president; and Mrs. Burdsall, treasurer.

Fund, was a Girl Scout leader and was a membver of the women's Thursday Morning Club. I was also for many years a member of the Fairview Hospital Ladies' Auxiliary and I served on the board of the Southern Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association. For three of these years, 1960-63, I was president of the VNA board and by special request was asked to preside for at least one more year in 1979. At the end of that year at the annual meeting, all the association members signed their names to a letter of special thanks which was presented to me. I also received a citation for my services to that organization.

A few times I was also asked by some church groups to speak about our Jewish customs and ceremonies. Thus I



Harry and Shifra Deykin

found that some of my notes tell about the Reverend Walter Miller of the Sheffield Congregational Church, known as Old Parish Church, that he asked me twice (October 18, 1959 and December 13, 1964) to talk before a group of adults and before their Sunday School and also to a group of the Congregational Church of Great Barrington.

My husband Harry was first hit with a heart attack in January 1958. Under the care of his physician, Dr. Thomas Gilligan, and the counsel of our son, Daniel, whose special interest in medicine is thrombosis, Harry continued to live a rich life for twenty-three years more.

In 1962 we both received a scroll of honor from State of Israel Bonds. Then Harry received a Jerusalem Award in August 1969 and again in August 1971. He received the David Ben Gurion Award in January 1978 at a regional dinner in Pittsfield for his work in Israel Bonds and UJA. He had been president of Avahath Shalom for one year and continued his activities in the other civic organizations, receiving a special award from the Izack Walton League for his devotion to their ideals of nature conservation.

Harry was one of the original members of the Lions Club of Great Barrington. He was also a Mason and was made a thirty-second degree recipient in 1956. He also traveled to take a course in real estate brokerage and received his diploma from the Lee Institute of Brookline on November 13, 1968. That December he received from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the certificate of a real

estate broker. He enjoyed being a realtor for many years.

In our private life, we were honored by our children and friends at our fortieth wedding anniversary and later also on Thanksgiving 1979 at our fiftieth wedding anniversary. However, on June 11, 1981 (Tet Sivan; Taf Shin Mem Alef), Harry lay down on the couch to rest and he never woke up. The following Sunday our son Daniel delivered a very touching and honoring mourning address at the funeral home, where a few hundred local people attended. The following day Sharon, Daniel and I flew with Harry on El Al to have him buried in Rishon-le-Zion in Israel.

I Am Not A Visitor -- I Am A Friend

The Reverend James G. Chase of Egremont recalled a time when he was a patient in the hospital and the physicians determined he should have no visitors. When Rabbi Jacob Axelrod, on his way to see Chase, was accosted by a nurse who pointed to the "no visitors" sign on the door, the rabbi responded simply, "I'm not a visitor, I'm a friend."

This anecdote, taken from The Berkshire Eagle's Name in the News for October 27, 1978, points out just the spirit which made Rabbi Axelrod, "a beloved clergyman devoted to the sick," popular with his congregation and with his community. The leader of the Ahavath Shalom Synagogue was honored that year as one of three recipients of a St. Luke's medal by St. Peter's Church for his contributions to the science of healing.

In his 60 years at the Synagogue, the Rabbi observed that the 100 percent observance by the Orthodox members in the early years gave way to a somewhat less intense commitment of younger members of the generation in the 1970s and '80s, though he added the younger members remained devoted to the traditional holidays and rituals of Judaism.

The Rabbi himself adhered strictly to the Orthodox traditions. For example, men and women were not allowed to sit together during services or bar mitzvahs. Members of his congregation remarked on his knowledge and interpretation of the Torah and of his care for the sick. Respected by other clergy in the town, he frequently took part in social functions and services at other churches. The Reverend John H. McDonnell of St. Peter's said, "He's a very cooperative colleague and I admire his loyalty to his traditions very much. He's very down to earth, easy to talk to and has a marvelous sense of humor." Chase, himself honored the previous year with the St. Luke's medal, said of the Rabbi: "He's very faithful and devoted to his people."

But let's go back much earlier in our story. As a student in Yeshiva, Jacob (Yankel) Axelrod realized that he must be practical. In 1923, he was already married and had a baby boy. He felt strongly that by continuing his studies to become a full rabbi, it would take him too long before he could make a living for his family. Therefore he added to his rabbinical course of education another program of study which led him to be a Shochet. Also, he decided to find his livelihood in the United States, as many others in this time and condition did.

In 1925, Jacob, the son of Aaron-Yechiel, left his hometown, Lubom, Poland, going through Warsaw, then to the seashore city of Bremen. The boats in those days were oversubscribed by passengers; therefore, he was detained in the migration area for more than two weeks before he could

embark. He later recalled that he was told, jokingly, that "When somebody dies you will get his place."

On board, he became very seasick, even before the anchor was raised in the harbor. Most of the time, he had to stay on the deck in the non-smoking area. Five days later, the captain told him that there was a vacant spot in the second class for an extra fee. "No, thanks," he responded. Before getting off the boat, he was, nevertheless, refunded fifty dollars, a sum which he immediately sent to his wife in Europe. When he landed at Ellis Island, his brother-in-law, Julius Rosen, met him. Rosen's wife Havah was the sister of Bella Lichetenstein, Rabbi Axelrod's wife.

Rosen took Jacob home to the Bronx. There he started to help Julius butcher chickens for the store owner. Six or seven months later, Isidor Karp came from Great Barrington to place an ad in the Jewish newspaper Der Tog (The Day) to find a rabbi and Shochet for his town.

Meanwhile, Jacob had also placed his ad in the same paper, stating that he was looking for a position. Karp met him at the Rosen house that Sunday night., Both went to a Jewish Turkish bath on Second Avenue, where they could talk at length without the audience of the family. Karp then saw Jacob home and told him to come to Great Barrington with him on the 3 p.m. train the following day.

When they arrived at Great Barrington, there was a meeting in the Shul for all members. About eighteen attended. Arrangements were discussed. The pay would be fifteen dollars per week. The duties facing Rabbi Axelrod

were: to conduct services, to butcher chickens; and to supply the local Jewish people with a source of Kosher meat. At that time, the price of butchering a chicken was fifty cents, but after they had paid him the weekly fifteen dollars, the price per chicken became only five cents a piece. The people signed a contract with a figure in mind that each family would buy between ten and fifteen pounds of meat, depending on the size of the family. When the rabbi told the group that he didn't know how to cut the meat in an American way suitable for the local consumers, they told him to go back to New York city where he could learn how to do it.

He did as he was advised, going to the city for two weeks to learn the trade. He apprenticed in a Brooklyn butcher shop, until he was told he had learned sufficiently. When he came back to Great Barrington, his first venture was a near-disaster: he had ordered a saddle of beef, but somehow, he "had made a mess of it," and finished off by having lost money in the enterprise.

An emergency meeting then was called of the synagogue members and himself, and the young man was told by the group of local Jewish constituents that they all wanted to help out and correct the situation. They therefore gave him one hundred dollars to cover the loss. The next quarter of beef was fine.

How did the rabbi manage in his daily life? When he

first came to Great Barrington, he stayed at the Slaminsky home, as he recalled, "from Adar (about March) until Tamuz (about June)."

But when the summer came and the Slaminskys wanted him to vacate his room and stay in the hall because they expected summer boarders, the rabbi looked for more suitable accommodations.

These were found at the home of Doabie Broverman Morgenstern and her husband, who worked at that time in Nathan B. Martin's meat market on Railroad Street. The Morgensterns lived then on the corner of Stockbridge Road and State Road. The rabbi stayed here about a half year, then the Morgensterns moved to New York City.

His next place of residence was at the home of Sam Rajonsky and his wife Lena. Sam was then the congregation's president. Here the rabbi lived until his wife Bella and their son Irving (Isaac Moshe) came from Europe in November 1927. Thereupon the family rented the house on North Street which belonged to Mrs. Fasoli. It had taken Bella two-and-a-half years to come here because her mother Chaye-Soreh was very attached to her daughter, said Axelrod sadly. In the meantime, the rabbi had a chance to furnish their home and to have it ready for his family. It was in this house that daughter Edie (Yudis) was born as well as Rose (Reysel).

However, they were not allowed to go to the ball games which were held on Friday nights, since at that time they

were to observe the Sabbath meal. The family joined on the Sabbath to relax and enjoy the candles over which their mother had made the proper blessing as she lit them at sundown and thereafter they enjoyed a festive Sabbath dinner.

A few years later, after Rose Pomerantz died and the rest of the family moved away, Aaron Pomerantz sold the large house at 29 State Road on the corner of North Street to the Axelrods. Here the youngest son David was born.

The store in which the rabbi operated his business was a little building near the Shul (Synagogue). It belonged to the congregation, which sold it to him. But he had to move it off the Synagogue grounds, toward the south. It still stands in the same spot. In order that the rabbi could meet the family's monetary requirements, he had to cater to a summer clientele of city people. He also provided the local Jewish people with Passover foods that he brought in for the holiday. Many non-Jews, as well, made purchases at Axelrod's meat counter because of the fresh quality of his merchandise.

Shortly after Bella came to town, she took her little son Itzhack-Moshe to the closest public school, Dewey, where the teachers gave him the Americanized name Irving. The parents recalled that the neighborhood children who came to call for him on their way to school taught him his new language by pointing to his clothing and naming each article, and with patience and kindness, made him repeat the

words -- coat, hat, shoes. Before his first week was up, he carried on a real conversation with friends.

All four Axelrod children went through eight grades at Dewey School and continued on to Searles High School. While in school, they were instructed by their parents that they could and should be friendly with all classmates.

After high school, all four children continued their education. Irving went to New York University and to the Gugenheim School of Engineering, where he received his diploma as an aeronautical engineer. Edie was graduated from North Adams State Teachers' College, where she received a bachelor's degree. She later received her master's degree in education from Boston University. Rosie received a bachelor's degree from Simmons College and a master's from Harvard. David went to Harvard College and then to Harvard Medical School. David became New York State Commissioner of Health in 1973, and is a well-known public figure in Albany and throughout New York State. Newspapers in October 1985 linked his name with that of New York Governor Mario Cuomo, as a prospective lieutenant governor. "No question," Cuomo told the press, "more people have recommended him than anyone else.

During the 1950s, while Irving was home on a vacation, he met Peggy Caron, whose parents owned a children's camp at Lake Buel. The young couple were married and lived in Long Island, New York. They had two girls and a boy. Toby studied at Columbia School of



Rabbi Jacob Axelrod and his wife Bella

Journalism. Ruth studied law at American University in Washington. And Joel studied at the State University of New York. Irving, now retired from engineering, teaches in the Long Island school system and his wife Peggy is also a teacher.

The happy events that Bella Axelrod enjoyed with her family were mostly connected with the Jewish way of life. In Great Barrington, she had the pleasure of the celebration of David's Bris (circumcision), the Bar Mitzvah of Irving and David and the events of the naming of the two daughters and, of course, all of the Jewish Holy Days. The local chapter of Hadassah bestowed on her a life membership. However, during the few years that followed Irving's wedding, Bella's health began to fail. Diabetes confined her to hospitals in Boston. Finally, in the winter of 1961, she was taken to Great Barrington's Fairview

Hospital, where she passed away. All of the local people missed her kindly smile and her cordial countenance.

In 1962, Edie married L. George Reder, a lawyer in Pittsfield. They made their home in that city with their two sons Benjamin (a high honor graduate of the high school there who went on to attend Harvard) and Daniel (an excellent student in Pittsfield High School). Remarkably, Edie was so devoted to the customs of the Friday night traditional Sabbath dinner as well as the nights before the Holy Days that on Friday mornings she would travel the twenty miles to her father's home in Great Barrington, prepare his Sabbath food as well as clean his house for the Holy Day. It is a great credit to her husband that the family adhered faithfully to this custom together over the years. The families of Rose and David later also joined them as often as possible, coming for the occasion from Albany.

In 1964, Rose was married to R.A. Levinson, who she met while both attended Harvard University. They now live in Delmar, New York, near Albany. They have two children, Betsy, who attended Albany High School, and Joshua, who is in the middle school.

A few months later, David married Janet Ross. Janet is a graduate of Radcliffe with a law degree from Columbia University Law School. She practices law in Albany.

In 1966, members of the community raised money for the rabbi to take a three-week trip to Israel, and after Passover in 1967, the money was presented to him at a parting dinner in his honor .

Rabbi Axelrod later recalled many details of that trip -- how the group had been shown the city of Jerusalem (then divided), the various caves, the surrounding walls, but not the Kotel (Western Wall). They also visited Tel Aviv, as well as Haifa. But the Six-Day War broke out just then, and that group of travellers was urged to leave on any boat on which it could find space. As a leader, Rabbi Axelrod would not leave until all of the others had been taken care of. Then he found a space on a boat which took him to France, and finally back home.

Fifteen years later, the Jewish community celebrated again in honor of Rabbi Axelrod. It was then that the



Rabbi Jacob Axelrod receiving the plaque from Herbert Moskowitz, with Nathan Brickman in the rear

Ahavath Shalom congregation thanked him for his fifty-five years of service, and all wished him well for many years to come. The upstairs social hall at the Synagogue was packed with people who had fond memories and deep gratitude for their kindly and wise leader over the years.

In 1957, a few weeks after the local radio station WSBS was established in Great Barrington, the station initiated a religious inspiration program. This was to be a public service to the community. In August that year, John Parson called a meeting to which he invited about fifteen local clergymen of various denominations, including the Rabbi. At that meeting, it was decided that the religious service would be aired in the mornings. It would last fifteen minutes and its content would include a five-minute sermon and ten minutes of recorded music chosen by the minister celebrating the day.

Pastor Chase of Egremont was appointed to be in charge of the scheduling of dates and ministers. He initiated the series on September 1, 1957. As of this writing, these religious programs are only two minutes in duration and are delivered three times each day. Of the original fifteen clergymen, only Chase and Axelrod remained active with the program. Chase in monitoring the schedule, remarked with admiration about the Rabbi's zeal in regard to his work.

The Rabbi's other duties over his long tenure included:

-- To conduct Yahrtzeit (memorial) services for individual parents of community members who passed away

or other deceased members of the congregation. The Rabbi recorded the dates for each of these memorial services, and according to his Jewish calendar, each year, a few days before that date, the Rabbi would notify the mourner who was to say the Kaddish and would make sure that there would be a Minyan (ten congregants) in the Synagogue for that night.

-- In the case of a death in the community, to conduct the mourning services, and then to continue leading the services at the home of the mourning family for a whole week, except on the Sabbath.

-- To teach boys who approach their eleventh birthday the proper blessings in preparation for reciting them at his Bar Mitzvah Ceremony (age thirteen). He also taught the boys how to wear the Teffillin (Philacteries) at the daily morning recitation of the prayers.

-- Sabbath and Friday night services were, originally, to be held. But because most of the community members were merchants and the greater part of business in the town was conducted at this time and most of the Jews could not compete with the gentile merchants while struggling to make a living, these services were eliminated.

-- To conduct services for all of the Jewish holidays of the year, such as Purim, Shavouot and Sooccot. The Rabbi would lead services whenever there was a full Minyan present; the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, of course, were always observed. It was on these

New Year Holidays that the Synagogue was always filled to capacity, with the families -- men, women and children -- and also people from the surrounding area. The seats were assigned in two sections -- one side for the men and one side for the women, in keeping with the requirements of the Orthodox tradition. (The children were free to roam.) The Rabbi prayed, chanted the beautiful ancient Jewish melodies, and blew the Shofar (ram's horn) very devotedly and with

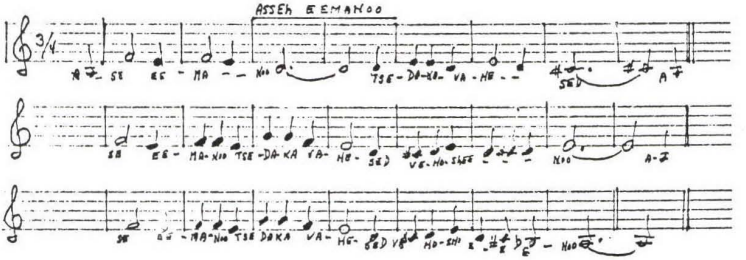


Rabbi Axelrod leading prayers

fervor all day long. When he recited the El Male Rahamim at the memorial part of the service of Yom Kippur, he repeated it for every deceased member of the families of these who were in the Synagogue at the time. As he liked to say, "My services are not wholesale; I give each one special attention."

In the early years the Rabbi and the older shul members chanted the words of the prayers -- all in Hebrew. In later years as all our sons and daughters grew older, and they and their families always came for the holidays, the younger voices would blend with the old. When the Rabbi chanted the melodies which became known to all attending, the whole assembly would feel spiritually uplifted and the melodies melted into one superhuman prayer to the Almighty.

"Do righteousness and mercy with us
and redeem us...
Asseh Emanu Tzedakah Vahessed
Asseh Emanu Txedakah Vahessed VeHoshee -- aynu."



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The vignettes in Shifra R. Deykin's engrossing history chronicle Jewish families fleeing Europe and eventually settling in Southern Berkshire County, Massachusetts. There they prospered as merchants and businessmen, raised families and formed their Love of Peace (Ahavath Shalom) Synagogue.

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Vignettes of Early Days in the Jewish Community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts

By Shifra R. Deykin

America was a "Golden Medina," a Golden Country, to Jews living under oppression in Eastern Europe in the early years of this century. Large numbers, emigrating to the United States, found urban life harsh. They were quickly attacted to the rural villages such as Great Barrington, Massachusetts. As that town's Jewish community grew, the need for a synagogue and rabbi became apparent.

The stories in this volume show how the Jews fled Europe, how they came to Southern Berkshire County, how they entered retailing and other trades, how they formed their Love of Peace (Ahavath Shalom) Synagogue in 1926 and how they and their families prospered.