JEWS IN NEW HAVEN

VOLUME VI

EDITED BY

WERNER S. HIRSCH



THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

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Volume VI

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WERNER S. HIRSCH



Ten Commandments, believed to be from the Ark of the Court Street Temple of Mishkan Israel
(COURTESY OF CONGREGATION MISHKAN ISRAEL, PHOTO BY CARL NEWLIN)

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Congregation "Mishkan Israel".

COURT ST., NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Sir,

I have the honor, by direction of the Trustees and Members of the above Congregation, to inform you, that the Consecration of their New Synagogue will take place on Friday

FRIDAY, the ~~6th of June~~ 5616–1856,

at 3 o'clock P. M precisely. On which occasion the pleasure of your Company is earnestly solicited.

By Order.

B. E. JACOBS, Sec'y.

Invitation to the dedication of the Court Street synagogue of Mishkan Israel, 1856 (see pages 24–25). This is a reproduction of an original at the Yale University Library.

(FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EDITOR)

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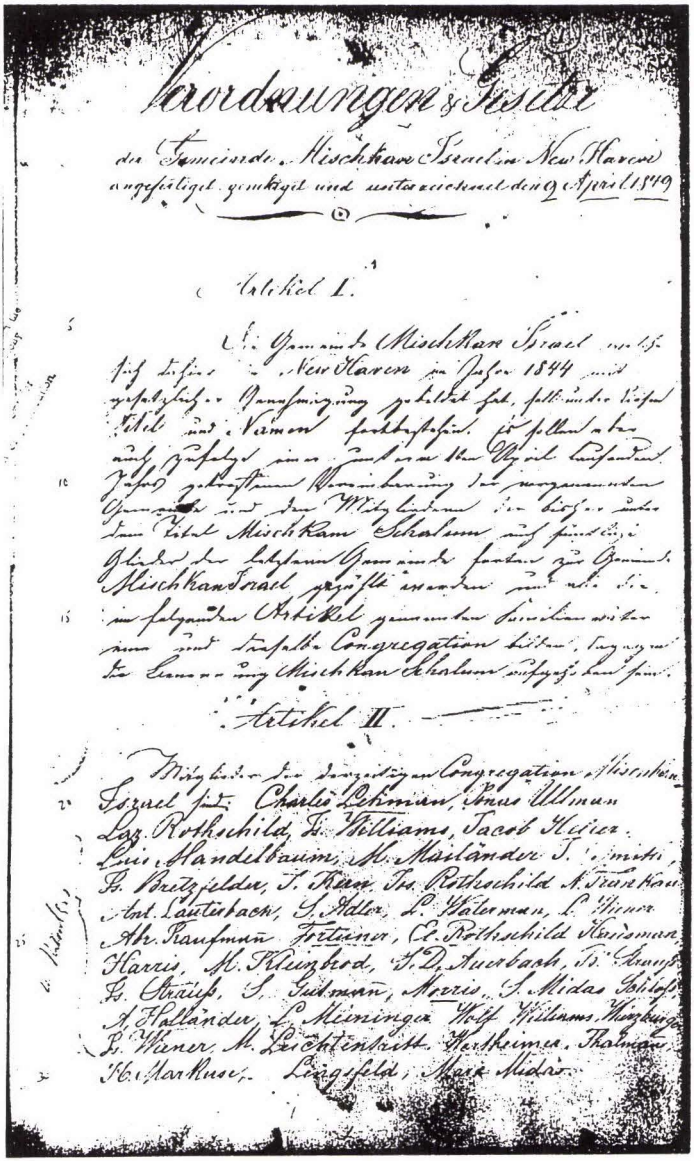
DEDICATION

This is the sixth volume that the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven has published in the *Jews in New Haven* series. It is an effective tool in recording our local Jewish History. Together with the material contributed to our archives by local institutions, organizations and families, as well as our recorded oral histories and the videotapes of presentations and comments at our program meetings, we are preserving for posterity a vivid record of Jewish life and experiences in the geographical area in which we operate.

Our appreciation is extended to WERNER HIRSCH, a past president and our Curator, who has collected, prepared and edited this edition, and we also want to acknowledge the assistance received from DR. BARRY E. HERMAN, MIRIAM SCHWARTZ, CARL NEWLIN, and the contributors of the articles and pictures included in this volume.

This book, and a recently completed reprinting of *Volume II,* were gifts from PRINT TWO THOUSAND, INC., printers and lithographers in Hamden. They prepared and produced this work with incentives from the State of Connecticut under the Neighborhood Assistance Act. We are indebted to them and to Steve Rivkin and Milton Greengas of that organization, who supervised this project.

Herbert D. Setlow,
President



Verordnungen & Gesetze

der Congregation Mischkan Israel in New Haven

angefertigt genehmigt und unterzeichnet den 9 April 1849

Artikel I.

Artikel II.

First page of the earliest Mishkan Israel minute book, entitled "Verordnungen & Gesetze [Rules & Regulations]" and dated 9 April 1849. The bottom of the page lists the names of the members of Mishkan Israel at that time. (COURTESY OF THE NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

The First Minute Book of the Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849–1860

by Werner S. Hirsch

Preface

The earliest minute book of the Congregation Mishkan Israel was reexamined in 1990 in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Temple. The book recounts the fascinating beginnings of Jewish life in New Haven, and allows us an insight into the organization and daily activities of an early American Jewish community. It also affords us a brief but tantalizing glimpse into the personal lives of the newly arrived pioneering immigrants.

Although the late Professor Rollin Osterweis wrote a history of the congregation's early years for their one hundredth anniversary in 1940, he could not read the old German Fraktur handwritten script and therefore did not make full use of these early minute books. Much of his research was based on a brief account written by Rabbi David Levy in the late 1800s, newspaper clippings, and on whatever public records and personal recollections were made available to him.

It is evident from the personal papers, which he left behind, that he probably had an assistant read these early minutes and make notes for him. But, it is also evident that the assistant was not able to interpret the Hebrew and the German-Jewish words and phrases that are interspersed throughout the records.

The 455-page manuscript, which I have now fully translated, gives us first-hand information about the early days of the Temple, its leaders, teachers, Rabbis, and Cantors. Along with many items

concerning dues structure and other financial matters, exclusion and fining of members, and a leaky steeple, there is also important detailed information about the transformation of the originally Orthodox congregation to the Reform ritual. Issues of kosher food, the order of prayers, mikvah *(ritual bath), and mixed seating are all openly discussed.*

I am deeply indebted to the staff of the New Haven Colony Historical Society for making the original manuscripts and other reference material freely available to me, and I thank them for their extreme helpfulness, generosity, and friendly cooperation.

———— • ————

THIS IS NOT REALLY the *first* minute book of the congregation, but more properly, the first minute book that is still in existence. Beginning in January 1849, it ends in the early months of 1861. The minutes themselves, indicate that this volume was purchased in October 1849 for the purpose of writing down their newly adopted Constitution and Bylaws, and in order to keep the minutes of the all of the meetings of the congregation as well as of its Board. There is also an entry which indicates that the Secretary was directed to copy the minutes from the "old minute book" into this new one.

A brief history of the New Haven Jewish community up to this time seems to be in order, so that the minutes can be understood in their proper perspective. The first permanent Jewish settlers started arriving in New Haven in the middle to late 1830s. In 1840 they held their first public worship, and finally became a full–fledged society, with the name of Mishkan Israel in 1843, when it became permissible under the laws of the State of Connecticut for non-Christian societies to organize. In that same year, the congregation also purchased a parcel of land of about one and three-fourths acres in Westville for use as a cemetery.

The twenty or so Jewish families in New Haven at that time were mostly German immigrants from Bavaria, although there were also some who came from Holland, Poland, Russia, and France. In only a few years, however, dissension plagued the small community

and a rift developed for which there probably were at least two primary reasons. First, the Jews of Germany had all been exposed to the ideas of Reform, which were then being promulgated there. Reform, at that time, did not mean a break from traditional Judaism, rather it meant a more orderly service, intended to be more "conducive to higher meditation". It was also being advanced as a means to return Jews, unsatisfied with the traditional services, to the fold. Mostly, it was probably imitative of Christian services, and made Jews feel more comfortable, since they were, after all, living in a Christian society. Reform was never intended to veer from the course of orthodoxy, but to reinterpret it in a modern vein strictly in accordance with *their* interpretation of the Jewish law. The Reform Jews of the 1840s called themselves Orthodox.

Generally, the Jews of Eastern Europe, and of non-German countries, rejected the ideas that were being preached by the reformers. They wanted to hold on to the traditional Judaism that they knew and understood, and with which they felt secure.

A second difference between these two groups was language. The native tongue of the non-German speaking Eastern European Jew was Yiddish. To the German, this sounded like very poor, uncultured speech. The German Jew did not (and *would* not) speak Yiddish (although he had his own peculiar '*Juedisch*' dialect, very much akin to Yiddish). The German Jew was also more assimilated, as well as more affluent, than the Easterner. Even though the German Jew had the highest regard for the Jewish education provided by the Polish yeshivas, the German Jew also felt the need for a higher secular, philosophical, and worldly education, available, *he* thought, only in the German universities. As a result of this outlook, the German often looked down upon the Eastern European Jew, as being of a lower social stratum.

These differences led to the split of the congregation in 1846. It is said that the Congregation Mishkan Israel remained orthodox, and that the newly formed Congregation Mishkan Scholom sought reform. It is not known just how this split was organized or how many people were involved with each group. The only thing that is known, is that the cemetery, which they had purchased earlier, was split in two. Because of disputes between the two congregations, the



Recently discovered oil portrait of Michael Milander which now hangs in the Rabbi's Study at Congregation Mishkan Israel. (COURTESY OF CONGREGATION MISHKAN ISRAEL, PHOTO BY CARL NEWLIN)

division of the cemetery was formalized by a deed, written two years later, on March 27, 1848. This deed was signed by Leopold Waterman and Nathan Frankau, on behalf of Mishkan Scholom, and by Jacob Heller, Lewis Rothschild, and Jacob Schmidt [Smith], on behalf of Mishkan Israel. It stipulated that no fence should ever be built between the two sections. Today it is still possible to look at the old section of the Mishkan Israel cemetery and to see where it was once divided.

The first meeting at Mishkan Israel, of which the minutes were entered in the ledger, took place on January 7, 1849. They discussed the "Rules" that had apparently been recently written, and deemed it important that all members sign their names to them. They also agreed to advertise for persons to fill the positions of Cantor, teacher, sexton [*shammes*], secretary, and *shochet* [ritual slaughterer]. These were all considered offices of the congregation, and were elected annually at Passover. It should be noted that New Haven already had a shochet, teacher, and cantor, namely Michael Milander, but he was in the employ of Mishkan Scholom.

At the meeting of February 25, 1849, Mishkan Israel hired Isaac Strauss, of Albany, as teacher, cantor, Rabbi, and secretary. The inclusion of the title "Rabbi" (the Hebrew word '*Rav*' is used in the original) along with "cantor," would indicate that Strauss was an ordained Rabbi, probably the first in New Haven. His salary was to be $300 per year, of which $100 would be paid by the congregation, $180 would come from fees paid to him by parents who had children in the school, and the rest would come (hopefully), from contributions. The fee for the school children was .75 per month, so that the number of children in the congregation can be calculated to have been 24 (based on a ten-month year).

The job of Sexton and Shochet was given to Lewis Meininger, a cigar maker, who had apparently come to New Haven to accept this position, with a salary of $50 per year. Although Meininger became very active in the religious life of Mishkan Israel, and lived the rest of his days here, he was found to be incompetent as a shochet after only a week and he quit. This required that the Rabbi, Isaac Strauss, perform the slaughtering, and that the Rabbi make inquiry of

the Jewish Court (*Bais Din*) in New York to resolve the problems of kashruth left by Meininger. Fortunately for Strauss, he did not have to perform these duties long, for on March 10, the congregation hired Mr. Rosenthal to fill the vacancy. This was also fortunate for the congregation, because Rosenthal not only had to be the sexton and the shochet, he also had to de-vein the meat in accordance with the Jewish law, *and* to serve as a cantor during the High Holidays—all for the salary of only $25 per year.

March of 1849 was indeed a very busy month in the life of the congregation. Not only did they hire their first Rabbi, they also passed a motion to build a new synagogue to replace their rented room in Armstrong's building. A location that they thought might be fitting had already been found, and a committee was appointed to inspect it, with the help of an architect, to see if it was suitable for a synagogue. The building was to have living quarters beneath it for the Minister and teacher, and later, a classroom and a *mikvah* [ritual bath] would be added on. The committee was also given the power to purchase the land.

That same month, Leopold Waterman, the President of Mishkan Sholom, approached Mishkan Israel with an offer to merge the two congregations. The only conditions for the merger that were stipulated by Waterman, were that the two cemeteries be combined, and that Michael Milander be allowed to continue to practice as a shochet at "Mr. Austin's shop," and that he receive free tuition in the school for his two children. Mishkan Israel agreed to these conditions, but indicated that if the members of Mishkan Sholom wished to join their congregation, they would have to pay their $2.00 entrance fees like anyone else. The delegation from Mishkan Sholom argued this point since, after all, they were giving them their cemetery; Mishkan Israel agreed. It was also agreed that the present officers of Mishkan Israel would continue to be recognized by the merged group. With this proposal, effective on April 1, 1849, 10 members of Mishkan Sholom joined the 23 members of the Congregation Mishkan Israel. Interestingly, there were also at least 26 known Jewish families living in New Haven who did not belong to Mishkan Israel and who were not a part of the merger. They were either unaffiliated altogether, or they remained as a remnant of Mishkan Sholom.

Another condition of the merger was that the name of Mishkan Sholom would cease to exist. Later, when a new congregation was formed in 1855, the first clause in their constitution was that, "This society shall have the name Bene Scholem, and it shall never be changed."

The name of Mishkan Sholom, and apparently the organization, did not quite go away, however, because almost a year later, in February 1850, the "existing members of the former congregation" offered to sell their "synagogue furniture" to Mishkan Israel for $50. Mishkan Israel later bought everything (except their shofar) for $35. The name comes up again in 1853, when Michael Milander asks the congregation to pay his legal fees for a dispute that he had with the former congregation.

In April 1849 when the annual elections were held, during Passover as they always were, Lazarus Rothschild was named President. The congregation also moved out of Armstrong's building, the room now being too small for the enlarged membership. They rented room #VI in Brewster's building, the same building where Mishkan Sholom had previously had their synagogue. They stayed there for about a year and a half, and then, in August 1850, moved again, to Todd's Hall on State Street. The room at Todd's hall was large enough to hold 84 seats for men and another 84 seats for the women.

In January of 1850, New Haven was visited by Rabbi Aron Selig–Ashkenazi, from Jerusalem. He was in America on a mission to raise money for the poor of the Holy Land. At the meeting where he was introduced to the congregation, $22.50 was raised on the spot, and it was agreed to take up an annual collection for this purpose and to send the money to Sir Moses Montefiore in London for disbursement. These collections were continued for a number of years.

On the subject of ritual, Mishkan Israel formed a committee in June of 1849 to investigate the "reform of prayers" and to make a recommendation to the congregation. This committee was continued for a while, but a final report was never issued. Later, in April 1850, however, certain changes were instituted in the services:

1. Choir singing was introduced for the beautification of the services.

2. Persons over fifteen were not permitted to be called to the Torah unless they were wearing a hat. Exceptions, however, could be made for persons under fifteen and for strangers, who were visiting the synagogue for the first time. They would be permitted to wear [skull]caps.

3. People would be given "tickets" for aliyahs, and would not be called to the Torah by name. Names would be used only in the *Mishaberach* prayer.

4. Persons were permitted to leave the synagogue only after the reading of the Haftorah and at the end of the service.

5. There was to be no loud singing or praying except by the choir.

6. Only the Cantor was to read the Haftorah—although exceptions could be made to this rule by the President.

7. The Cantor or the Sexton would lead the mourners in the recitation of the Kaddish prayer.

8. Children under four would not be allowed in the synagogue. For children between four and seven, boys had to sit with their fathers, and girls with their mothers.

9. The use of the Holiday prayer book [*Machzor*] for the festivals [Sukkoth, Passover, and Shevuoth] was abolished. [It should be noted that, today, few Orthodox synagogues use the *Machzor* for these festivals.]

During a meeting in May, an additional rule was passed, that the congregation should be guided by the actions of the President and the vice-president, for standing during the services.

In August 1850, rule 8, above, was changed, in that the children were not to sit with their parents, but together in their own appointed place, "still and quiet." At that same meeting in August, several other actions were taken in order to maintain order and quiet in the synagogue. The President, charged with the responsibility of maintaining decorum, was to appoint two deputies during the holidays, to help him in his charge. The members were asked "to solemnize the services, in quiet devotion, without unruly behavior and

disorderly shouting back and forth." Members who were not able to sing along with the Cantor using the proper tune, were asked not to disturb the services by singing off-key. It was also forbidden to sing ahead of the Cantor, and this carried a fine of .25 to $1.00. Later that same month, the reading of the *Machzor* on the festivals was reinstituted, so that "the prayers shall be said according to the old ritual."

It is possible to glean a few other details about Jewish life at Mishkan Israel during the first few years of its existence. The cantor wore a "choir robe," which was mentioned several times in the minutes in motions to either repair it, or to buy a new one. Candles for use on the Sabbath and also for Chanukah were sometimes purchased, and sometimes made by members of the congregation, as were the *challah* and wine used for Kiddush. Matzo for Passover was ordered from a baker in New York for anyone who wanted it. The order, in pounds, was sent in advance and then, before the holiday, a delegation would go to New York to accompany the shipment back to New Haven. The congregation used High Holiday prayer books printed in Roedelheim, Germany, a standard traditional Orthodox text. The congregation had the use of three Torahs, all of which were privately owned. The first belonged jointly to Lewis Rothschild and Lewis Mandelbaum, the second to Isaac Smith, and the third to Bernard Shoninger (they were insured for $50 each, how times have changed!).

Whenever problems or questions of Jewish law arose, the questions were directed either to the Jewish Court (*Bais Din*) in New York, or to Dr. Merzbacher, a leading reform rabbi in New York. Some of the questions which required such consultation included the acceptability of a shofar in which a flaw was found, what to do with one of the Torahs that was found to have "marks" in it and therefore might be unfit for use, and the certification (*Kabbalah*) of their shochet.

Since the Shochet was an elected, paid official of the congregation, only members had the inherent right to buy kosher meat. There were apparently also many nonmembers in New Haven who wanted this privilege. In order for them to purchase kosher meat, they had to pay an annual fee to the synagogue of $3.00, and to carry

a special pass from the President for identification when making a purchase. Failure to adhere to these rules meant a heavy fine to either the Shochet or to the butcher who sold the meat. It was also not permitted for a member to purchase meat and then to give it to a nonmember, an offense for which he could be expelled. This problem seems to have been severe enough, so that eventually a list of names of nonpaying nonmembers was posted in the shops that sold kosher meat.

Another problem which arose, was the attendance at the synagogue of nonmembers on a regular basis. There were a number of men who came regularly in order to say Kaddish, but who did not pay dues to the congregation, and generally the board was lenient with them. Eventually, however, two classes of membership were instituted, a regular dues–paying member, and a seat–holder who had all the rights of a member except the right to vote at meetings. Special tickets could also be purchased for the High Holidays by nonmembers and for visiting guests.

The Rev. Isaac Strauss, who had been hired in 1849, applied for membership in the congregation in March of 1850. The board, assuming that he would remain for another term, decided not to advertise the job of Cantor in the Jewish press as was usually done. Strauss, however, stated that he would only stay on for an additional four weeks, during which time the job should be advertised. He also asked permission to leave the city for six days, without explanation, and he withdrew his membership application. He clearly had no intention of staying. In May 1850, the congregation hired Samuel Zunder to be their Cantor and Secretary.

The President of the congregation in 1850 was Leopold Waterman, a man known to have had a strong bent toward reform. We can also assume that Samuel Zunder, who came from New York to fill the position of Cantor, also had reform leanings. It was only a month after Waterman's election that the above listed changes in the conduct of the services were instituted. When the motion was made to eliminate the use of the *Machzor* on the festivals, Zunder said that

> ...experience and belief have taught him, that the reading of the *Machzor* is not necessary to maintain devotion in the synagogue, but much more often has the contrary effect.

This view was shared by many advocates of reform.

With Waterman and Zunder in leadership positions, the congregation made moves toward the reforming of its services, slowly, to be sure. Nevertheless, this stirred up conflict within the community. It seems that Jacob Heller was one of the leaders of the opposition. In May 1850, during the *Shevuoth* services, the first holiday services led by Zunder, Heller caused a disturbance, and a special meeting of the trustees was held to deal with this problem. The resolution in the minutes is as follows:

> Jacob Heller has broken one of the rules of the congregation, and shall therefore be fined $ .50. However, since he is in the habit of causing disturbances wantonly, he shall, with a future transgression of a rule, be fined $5.00.

Things were relatively quiet for another year. In April 1851 both Waterman and Zunder were reelected to their positions. But in May 1851, the following complaints were all brought against Samuel Zunder:

> 1. He does not put on a Choir robe on Friday evenings in the synagogue.
> 2. He has a table belonging to the congregation, which he used until now, still standing in his old residence.
> 3. He has congregational property in his possession.
> 4. His leading the prayers and reading in the synagogue is bad.
> 5. He sold a bench belonging to the congregation to Mr. I. Williams.

In Mr. Zunder's defense, through the testimony of witnesses, it was shown that all of these complaints were unfounded, and therefore he was excused from any punishment. Another unfounded (and undefined) complaint against Zunder was brought to a meeting of the trustees in July, and was also rejected.

In August Leopold Waterman resigned the presidency, saying that he could no longer continue in his position in good conscience, and he asked that his office be given to another. Waterman turned the chair over to the vice-president, Jonas Ullman, and an election was held immediately for a new President. The following is recorded in the minutes:

> Hereupon an election was held for a new President, of 20 votes, Mr. [Jacob] Heller received 17, and was herewith declared President of the congregation. He immediately took over his office, with the statement, that he will work only for the good and welfare of the congregation. He also noted: the congregation wants to give its thanks to the former President, Mr. Waterman, for his faithful and unselfish service. This was *almost* unanimously accepted.

Zunder's troubles were just beginning. An item from the minutes of a general meeting of the congregation held in October 1851:

> A written complaint was presented from Rev. S. Zunder against President Jacob Heller, the President refused to accept it, and also, the congregation refused to accept it, and for today, under heated debate, the meeting was ended.

At a special meeting held in February 1852, it was decided to again advertise for someone to fill the position of Cantor. At the same meeting Jonas Ullman brought yet another charge against Zunder, "that he allegedly transgressed, in that he ate potatoes and cakes at the Masonic supper." A committee of seven was appointed to investigate this charge. Two weeks later, without any resolution of this situation, Samuel Zunder applied for membership in the congregation and was accepted.

The committee that was conducting the investigation had not yet reported their findings, when Jacob Heller brought several more unspecified charges against Zunder, and also prescribed several fines. This action was approved by the trustees. Zunder, who of course was also the Secretary, noted in the minutes, that he was not permitted to defend himself against these charges.

At a general meeting on April 5, 1852, the so called "Potatoes Committee" presented a written report. This report

> ...made very careful inquiries which determined, that the potatoes which Rev. S. Zunder ate at the Masonic supper, were cooked with steam, and what it was about the cakes, was, which were made with butter and which with lard, and since it was not possible to determine with certainty of which kind Zunder ate, the committee does not feel that it has the right to make a judgment about this.

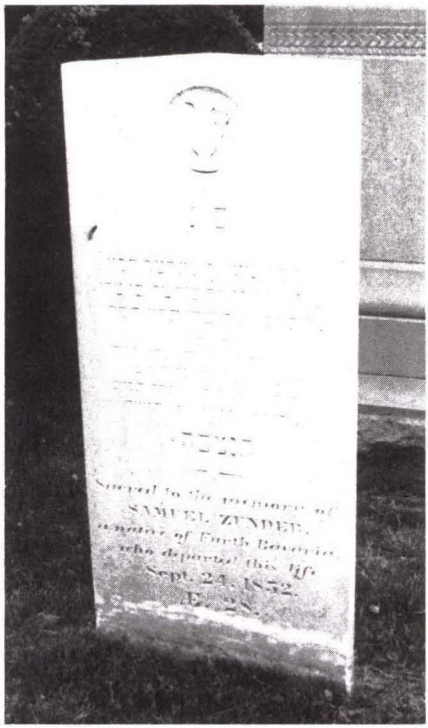
The report was accepted, the "Potatoes Committee" discharged, and the original charge brought by Jonas Ullman, rescinded. At the same meeting Jacob Heller was reelected for another term as President, and Leopold Sternheimer, from Philadelphia, was elected Cantor as a replacement for Samuel Zunder.

A couple of days later, the Board of Trustees found Zunder innocent of all of the other charges that had been brought against him, and absolved him from the fines which Jacob Heller had tried to impose. Samuel Zunder gave up the "ministry" and opened a grocery store on Church Street. Unfortunately, he died a mere five months later, in September 1852, at the age of only 28. After his death, his younger brother, Maier, came to live in New Haven and to take over his business.

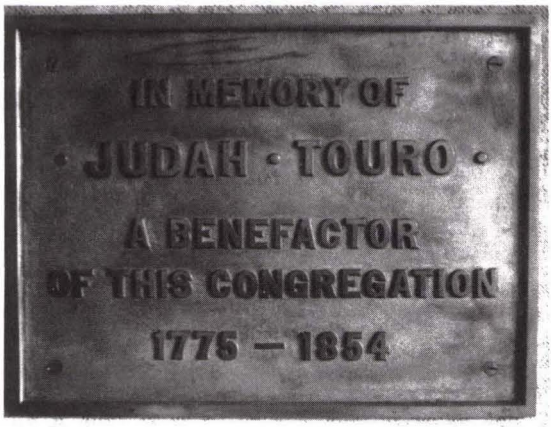
Now that Jacob Heller had taken over the presidency, the congregation seems, once again, to have taken a turn away from reform, and back to more traditional ways. In May of 1852, Mr. Milander was sent to New York in order to be examined for his competence as a shochet and to be certified. Also, the cantor would no longer have to lead the mourners in the recitation of the Kaddish.

The membership of the congregation was steadily growing. In April 1852, when the school was restarted for the year, there were over forty children enrolled. That same year the first two members were accepted from out-of-town, Mr. Cherk and Mr. H. Kalman, both from Waterbury.

Back in 1849, even before the merger with Mishkan Sholom, Mishkan Israel had formed a Building Committee to search for a place to build a synagogue. The first major steps in this direction were taken in March of 1852 when Israel Bretzfelder and Lewis Rothschild bought a building lot on State Street for the congregation. Throughout the remainder of the year various plans were discussed







Gravestones of Samuel Zunder and Lewis Meininger at the Mishkan Israel Cemetery, and memorial plaque for Judah Touro which hangs at the Mishkan Israel synagogue. (PHOTOS BY WERNER S. HIRSCH AND CARL NEWLIN).

for raising enough money to proceed with the construction. Even though several hundred dollars were raised and many pledges were received, it wasn't enough to even pay for the property, let alone the building of a new synagogue. In January of 1853 the Building Committee was discharged, and some of the members of the congregation wanted to sell the lot.

There seem to have been other Jews in the greater New Haven area in those early years too, for in February 1853, a notice was received from the Select Council of East Haven that a Jew was found there—dead. The trustees sent a carriage to East Haven to investigate the situation, and were prepared to make the necessary arrangements to have the body buried in Mishkan Israel's cemetery. Another unfortunate incident occurred in September of that year, when Mrs. Rachel Leon Levy, a visitor to New Haven from Puerto Rico, died here. For a fee of $100, the officers of Mishkan Israel made all of the necessary arrangements to have her laid to rest in their cemetery.

With the elections in April 1853, Mr. Lewis Mandelbaum was unanimously elected President, but he was not at the meeting, and when he was later informed of his election, he refused to serve. Mr. Forster was elected in his place. Amidst some dissension, Mr. Leopold Sternheimer was reelected as the Cantor. These elections also saw the introduction of a new office, to be combined with the position of Sexton, that of Gravedigger. His responsibilities would include opening the grave, making arrangements for the setting of a stone, and keeping records of all burials in the cemetery. He was to be paid a salary of $100, and in addition, would receive a fee of $2.00 for digging the grave of an adult over thirteen, $1.50 for the grave of a child under thirteen, and $1.00 for arranging the setting of a headstone. The first person to hold this new position was Abraham Kern.

During the course of the year, there were more squabbles within the congregation. The Shammes was accused of having embezzled money that was entrusted to him, and he resigned his position. Also Jacob Heller complained that Mr. Milander had publicly called him a liar, and that he had not received an apology from him nor from the Board nor from the congregation, and he resigned his

position as a Trustee. The congregation, without further comment, accepted his resignation. Possibly anticipating trouble, the Board, in September of 1853, hired a City Watchman who would be present in the synagogue during the holidays to prevent any disturbances during the services. In November of that same year, Mr. Forster resigned his position as President, without explanation and in January 1854, the following letter was received:

> To the President and the Members of the Congregation Mishkan Israel, New Haven:
>
> The continuous disorder in your congregation, and your refusal of my rightful claims, make my position as Cantor and Secretary so difficult, that I feel obliged to quit from the said position, and, herewith, I hand you my resignation.
>
> Respectfully,
> L. Sternheimer

Until Passover, Lewis Meininger volunteered to lead the Sabbath services, and Benjamin Sugenheimer volunteered to read the Torah and also took on the responsibilities of Secretary. Mr. Milander also provided his services as cantor.

Leopold Waterman was appointed Chairman of a committee to draft a new Constitution and Bylaws in March 1854. Although there is no copy of this new constitution, we know that under the revised bylaws officers were no longer elected by the members. Rather, the membership elected seventeen persons to a Board of Directors, each serving nonconcurrent three year terms, and the Directors elected the officers from among their own group. The first President, elected under the new rules, was Leopold Waterman.

In April 1854, Michael Milander was elected Cantor, Shochet, Sexton and Gravedigger, all for a term of six months, and with a combined salary of $190. From this he also had to hire an assistant, acceptable to the Board, to de-vein the meat. Benjamin Sugenheimer was elected Secretary, also for six months.

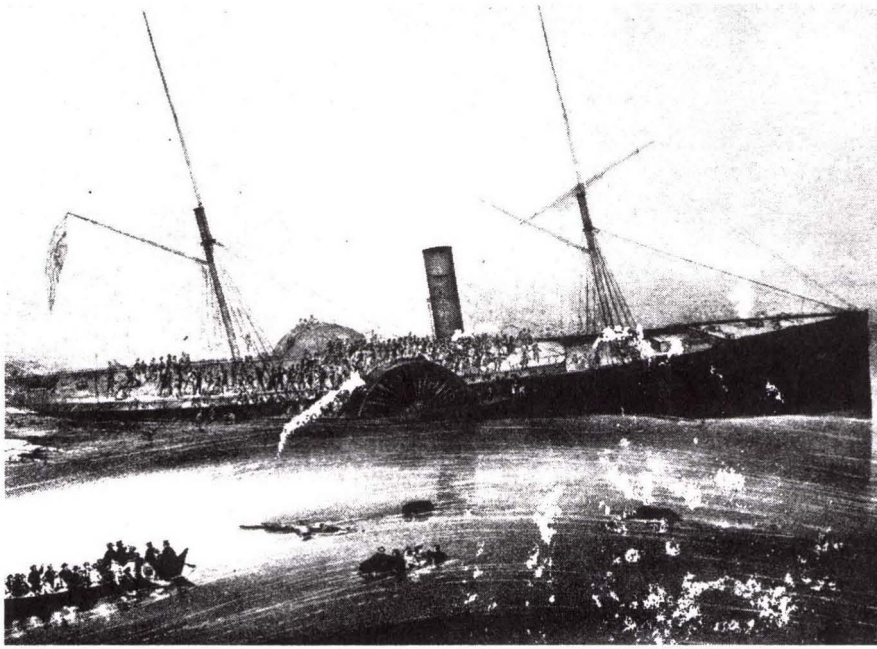
A new era was about to begin for the Congregation Mishkan Israel when Judah Touro died on January 18, 1854, in New Orleans. By February, Leopold Waterman had received reports that the Jewish

Congregation in New Haven had been named in the will, and Mr. Smith was appointed to go to New Orleans to collect the bequest. Touro, however, was only temporarily interred in New Orleans. His funeral was not to take place until June 6, in Newport, Rhode Island. In April, Isaac Nadler, Jacob Heller, and Julius Waterman were elected to a committee that would attend the funeral. In June, however, Julius Waterman had to decline, because his brother, Leopold, with whom he was in business, was taking a trip to Europe. In his place, both Jonas Ullman and Bernard Shoninger said that they would attend, at their own expense. Of this committee of four, Jacob Heller was officially authorized by the congregation to collect the money, and on June 13, 1854, in Boston, he was presented a check in the amount of $5,000.

In June 1854, when Leopold Waterman went to Europe, Isaac Williams was officially appointed President during Waterman's absence. Leopold Waterman was never to return. During his voyage home on September 27, 1854, his ship, the *Arctic* collided with the French steamer *Vesta*, and he was lost at sea.

After the congregation had been notified of the receipt of the $5000, they reaffirmed their wish to build or buy a new synagogue. In part financed by the $5000, and in part by an assessment of $30 per member to be paid, with interest, over a three year period. The synagogue was to have space for a schoolroom, living quarters for the minister, and a mikvah. For this, the congregation authorized the Board to spend 10 to 15 thousand dollars. A new committee for this purpose was appointed, chaired by Nathan Frankau.

In July, Frankau reported that the church on Court Street was for sale for $12,000. The committee was empowered by the Board to purchase the building, then occupied by the Third Congregational Society, for the stated price, and to hire an attorney or other experts as required "and to do all other acts which they may think fit for the purpose of providing this Congregation with a suitable place of worship." They also agreed to sell the lot that the congregation still owned. The church was purchased on September 11, 1854, with three notes totaling $7,000, held by the Third Congregational Society. The property seems to have consisted of two buildings, the Church and a Lecture Room. A clause in the deed provided that the



The Arctic *sinking off Cape Race after it collided with the French steamer* Vesta *on September 27, 1854. The* Arctic *suffered a loss of 322 lives, including that of Leopold Waterman. This is a reproduction of a lithograph by N. Currier, based on a sketch by a survivor of the disaster.* (FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EDITOR)

Third Congregational Society "reserves to themselves the bell, organ, table in the pulpit, and pew furniture..."

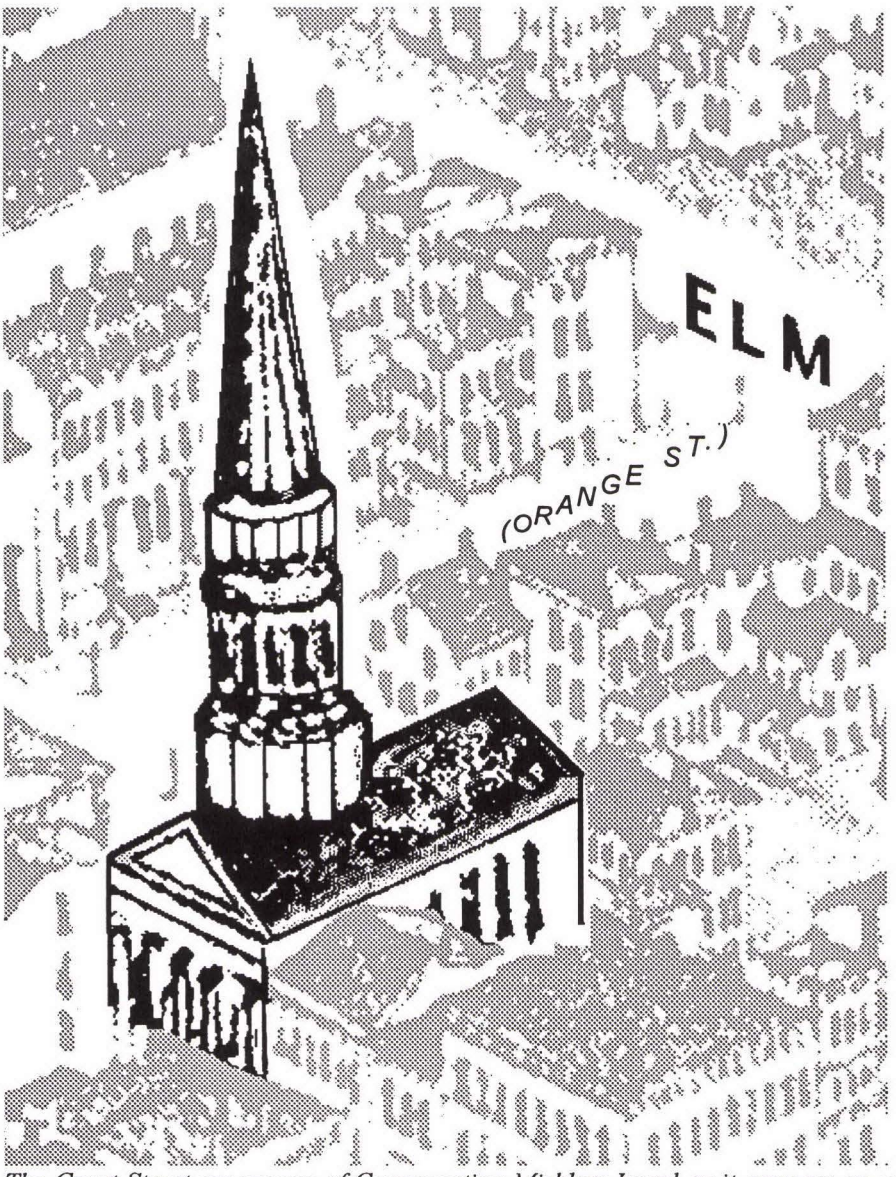
The following October, when elections were again held for a Cantor, there were two candidates, Mr. Samuel Wiel [this might have been Samuel Weil] and Mr. Herman Bien, both from New Haven, and each received thirty votes. Since the vote was tied, the congregation decided not to hire a cantor at all until the following Passover. Until then, the President was to appoint a cantor from the membership, each week. The appointee would receive $2.00, and would be required, not only to lead the services, but also to officiate at all religious functions during that week, including funerals and weddings, without any additional fees.

In April of 1855, they voted to move out of their rented synagogue on State Street, and to begin holding services in the Lecture Room on Court Street on November 1, but this was to be delayed by many months. It was also resolved, by the Synagogue Committee, that

> ...each member, who had paid his $30, shall be given one man's and one lady's seat, separated, for which every member will be given a deed, with the assurance that a regular Cantor, who must be able to read the Torah, know Hebrew, and be a preacher, will be hired by the Synagogue,and that, at least on every Sabbath, a service, following the Ashkenazi [German] tradition, will be held.

The first official use of the Court Street building was made on Sunday, May 13, 1855, at 9:00 in the morning, when a general meeting of the membership was held in the Lecture Room. All subsequent meetings would be held there. The following month, the congregation hired Mr. Isaac Fernbach, of New York, for the position of Cantor and Teacher. He was also given the use of the Lecture Room for his school.

In June 1855 the Congregation B'nai Scholom was founded. There is no direct mention of this in Mishkan Israel's records. However, in August, a list of twenty-eight names appears in the minutes,



The Court Street synagogue of Congregation Mishkan Israel as it appears on a pictorial map (computer enhanced), The City of New Haven, 1879, *by Bailey and Hagen. One of the small buildings to the rear of the Temple may have been the 'Lecture Room' described in the minutes.* (FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EDITOR)

of those members who had not paid their dues. Of these, however, only seven were dropped from the membership rolls, and some of those paid their debts and returned to the congregation at a later date. The division of the Mishkan Israel congregation which has been reported, does not seem to have occurred. If any members of Mishkan Israel did leave in order to join B'nai Scholom at this time, it was most probably not over the issues of "Reform" *versus* "Orthodox." Rather, Mishkan Israel promised to have services in the Ashkenazi (or German) tradition, while the bylaws of B'nai Scholom stated that, "The services shall strictly follow the Polish ritual."

The first hint of the existence of another synagogue appears in the minutes of September 2, 1855, when a restriction is placed on the Shochet, Shammes, and Gravedigger, "that he may not perform these services for another society." Another reference on September 16, reads:

> Those members of the recently formed Jewish society here, shall not be given seats in the synagogue by the members of the congregation, and the President has no right to let them be called to the reading of the Torah, even if they are obliged [under Jewish law or tradition] to be given an aliyah.

In regard to the position of shochet, the Board stipulated, that even though the shochet receives a salary from the congregation, the congregation would not be obligated to compensate him in the event that another shochet comes to New Haven. This was necessary, since the fees that the shochet received depended on the quantity of kosher meat which was sold.

During the summer of 1855, the church and the land that it stood on were very carefully examined, plans were drawn of the existing structures, and a surveyor was hired to draw a plot plan. Minor discrepancies, such as a stone wall that separated the church from the adjacent property of Mr. Merwin, was found to encroach on the congregation's property by seven and one–half inches. The property lines were carefully corrected by deeds.

An inventory was taken but is not listed in the minutes, so that very little is known about the interior furnishings. There is mention of

the carpets in the church, and that the total value of the furnishings was about six thousand dollars, and that there were 114 available seats. It was also found that repairs were required in both the church and in the Lecture Room.

In the meantime, no work was started on the sanctuary itself, and plans were being made to hold the 1855 High Holiday services in their old synagogue on State Street. They were not in a hurry. In fact, when the Third Congregational Society approached Mishkan Israel with a request that they rent their church back to them until the following April, the congregation readily agreed.

In January of 1856 a committee was chosen to determine how the seats would be distributed by a lottery, to make a proposal as to how the Holy Ark and the mikvah are to be built, and in general, how the interior of the synagogue should be arranged.

Mr. Aaron Strauss was elected as a committee to draw a plan of the interior furnishings, especially of the Holy Ark, of the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue in New York City, and to present this at the next meeting of the congregation.

In February 1856 a special meeting of the congregation was held, where all of the members were allowed to view and inspect the church. At the same meeting a motion was made not to have separate seating for men and women, but this motion was defeated 13 to 19. Later, a motion was made by William Friedman, that

> ...all the pews in the Court Street church be cut in half, and to make an aisle of two feet between each row, two rows standing next to each other, each numbered the same, and to give each member of the congregation one of these separated seats for himself, and an opposing, similarly numbered, and separate seat for his wife, ascribed to him as private property.

Even though the pews were to be privately owned, the owners could only allow blood relatives to sit there, or, for a short time,

visiting friends. The synagogue reserved the right to rent pews to others when the rightful owners were absent.

An Arrangement Committee, consisting of William Friedman, Jacob Heller, Jacob Mailhouse, Julius Waterman, Lewis Friedman, and Lewis Rothschild, was formed to prepare a plan, with the help of an architect, for the interior remodeling of the church, and to present it to the congregation.

After deliberating with architects, the committee reported

> ...that the carrying out of this [remodeling] is not only connected with substantial cost, but also is almost unadaptable to the oblique position of the church, and in general will not beautify the church, and therefore recommends to the esteemed congregation, the reconsideration of the past resolution regarding the seats, and the acceptance of the recommendation:
>
> That the seats in the existing benches be separated in the middle by a wooden divider, and that each entitled member of the congregation shall receive such a bench as his private property, for himself and his wife.

Apparently neither plan suited the congregation, because in March they decided to build a balcony for the women. Their proposed method of raising the funds for the balcony was unique. They elected a committee, whose assignment was to try to spirit members away from B'nai Scholom. They were supposed to

> ...inquire at the *other* Jewish Society that was formed here, [to find out] how many members of that society want to transfer to this congregation. Then, each incoming member will have to pay $5.25 entrance fee, and $10.00 synagogue dues, from which a balcony could be built in the Court Street church.

Another committee was appointed to have circulars printed to solicit funds for the new furnishings.

In January 1856, Jacob Heller, Lazarus Rothshild, Julius Waterman, Nathan Frankau, and Lewis Asher were appointed to a committee to have a Holy Ark, a reading desk [*al memar*], and gas installed in the new synagogue; to have it whitewashed, and to have all

other necessary repairs made. It was further decided to begin using the Lecture Room on Court Street for services beginning on April 1, and that all of the remaining effects in the synagogue on State Street were to be sold.

Mr. Isaac Fernbach, the cantor, seems not to have been very popular with the congregation. For one thing, he was never given a regular contract, as were other paid officials, but he was hired provisionally, month by month. It was also voted at one Board meeting, that he should be sent a written notice to "avoid smoking in the Lecture Room, and in general, to keep the room clean." In January 1856 the congregation once again advertised, and accepted applications, for the position of Cantor and Teacher. Many applications were received from around the country, and of these, three were chosen to spend a Sabbath in New Haven for a trial. On Saturday, February 2, 1856, the Rev. Benjamin E. Jacobs, from New York, led the services and preached to the congregation.

When the elections were held in March, Rev. Jacobs defeated Rev. Fernbach by a vote of 28 to 1. The newly elected President was Isaac Williams.

On April 6, 1856, a committee was to have the effects of the synagogue on State Street brought to the Lecture Room and their old synagogue in Todd's Hall would no longer be used.

Apparently the fund–raising scheme for the gallery, by pirating members from B'nai Scholom, didn't prove very successful, because in May 1856, the congregation decided to allocate up to $300 for its construction. The money was to be raised by contributions. Ninety dollars was pledged immediately by several of the members (some of whom would later be associated with the Congregation B'nai Scholom), and a committee was appointed to solicit the rest. They hired Sidney Stone, a prominent New Haven architect for the remodeling, which was a good choice, since he was also the architect who had designed the original church. Later that month a contract was signed with William J. Pratt who would build the gallery for $290—without the paint.

The date for the dedication had originally been set for June 6, 1856, but because of the work being done on the gallery, this was indefinitely postponed.

Plans for a magnificent dedication were gotten under way. The Board met with the Rev. Jacobs to lay out the program. Special cards with psalms, prayers, and songs were to be printed in New York. It was also decided to invite Dr. Raphall and Dr. Henry, both from New York, to participate in the dedication. (Dr. Raphall was a prominent orthodox rabbi.) The president was to have a new robe and a cap made for the Rev. Jacobs. A cover for the reading desk and a curtain for the Ark would be made from a piece of damask which Julius Waterman had obtained in New York and donated to the congregation.

It was further decided that the assignment of the seats in the new synagogue would take place in the following manner:

> The names of the members of the congregation shall be written on individual pieces of paper, and similarly the numbers of the slips [pews] which are to be distributed. These should be placed into two separate containers, so that the names will be in one container, and the numbers in another. Then two children, simultaneously, will draw a name and a number, which number will be the slip for the member's name which is drawn.

Regarding the seats, it was further resolved that,

> Each member shall be allowed to have his seat upholstered. Other modifications shall be made only with the approval of the congregation.

A few new rules were made concerning the services. It was decided that the President and the Vice President will no longer sit on either side of the Ark, but are to sit with the rest of the congregation. During the reading of the Torah, only the President will stand on the platform (*Al Memar*), specifically, on the left side of the reader. It was also agreed to continue the auctioning of synagogue honors as before.

The duties of the Cantor were also prescribed:

He shall lead the prayers at all religious gatherings, and shall comply with the requests of the President during services.

He shall officiate at all marriages in the congregation.

He shall be at liberty to preach at any time that he wishes in the synagogue.

On Sabbaths and Holidays he shall perform his functions dressed in a robe.

He shall, if possible, establish a choir, if people volunteer for it.

He must function at funerals, deliver eulogies, be present at the *minyan*, mornings and evenings, and during the *shivah* and *sh'loshim* periods for a member, and to say the necessary prayers, and to engage in study with those present.

In setting up a school, the Rev. Mr. Jacobs was to open a temporary school for three months, where instruction would be given in both English and Hebrew. He was to administer a test to the children before the opening of the school, and again at the end of three months, in order to show the congregation how far the children had progressed under his tutelage. One other rule was established for the school. Children whose parents did not belong to any synagogue could be enrolled for a special fee, but children whose parents belonged to another synagogue were not allowed at all.

The congregation met again in June, and the date of the dedication was finally set for Friday, July 11, 1856. Lewis Asher, Jacob Heller, Meyer Kahn, Jacob Smith, Lewis H. Friedman, Simon Silverthau, and Israel Bretzfelder were named to head the Dedication Committee, and to be responsible for all the details.

It was decided to have the new Torah Ark curtain embroidered at a cost of $25–$50. Michael Milander, Jacob Kern, Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rothshild, and Salomon Midas, together, donated $9.50 toward this project. The remainder of the money was apparently donated by the Young Men's Society.

Joseph Rothshild, Lewis Friedman, and Simon Silverthau were appointed to a committee to collect money with which they were to hire a band.

At the dedication, Abraham Kreuzer was to open the synagogue. The three Torahs would be carried in a procession around the synagogue by the oldest members of the congregation, in similar fashion to the seven circuits made in the sanctuary on Simchat Torah. Chosen for this honor were Israel Bretzfelder, Lazarus Rothshild, Jonas Ullman, Michael Milander, Lewis Meininger, and Benjamin Strauss. They would exchange Torahs at the fourth circuit. (The oldest of these "old" men was 60; their average age was about 54.)

Each member would be sent one ticket for a friend or acquaintance, but additional tickets would be available on request.

All the seats, having now been numbered, were distributed by lottery. Sixty-six seats were assigned to men, and sixty-five to women.

The dedication was held without further comment in the minutes, except to thank the committees that worked on the affair. The speakers, Dr. Henry and Dr. Raphall were each to be sent a gift of a silver cup or plate with a value of $25–$30, and were asked for written copies of their speeches. One thousand copies of these speeches were later printed by the congregation and distributed to all the members.

An announcement was placed in the local newspapers thanking all those who made donations to the synagogue at the dedication, many of which were received from non-Jews. All donors were also sent copies of Dr. Henry's and Dr. Raphall's sermons.

The first High Holiday services that were held on Court Street, in the fall of 1856, were led by the Rev. Jacobs with the assistance of Michael Milander, and Lewis Meininger. B. E. Jacobs was also a *Mohel* [one who performs a ritual circumcision], and he was reminded that all of the services which he might perform for non-members, required that a fee be paid to the congregation.

The first mention of any ornamentation for the Torahs came just before the High Holidays in 1856, when Isaac Williams, a clothier, who was in business together with Jonas Ullman, made a silver Torah pointer, and presented it to the congregation.

General clean-up and other improvements continued. Portable wood–burning stoves were set up in the synagogue in November 1856. Also all of the unneeded things that had been left in the church were sold, as well as the old furnishings from their previous synagogue.

In April of 1857 the bylaws were again changed, so that from then on only seven men would be elected to the Board, including the officers who would now, again, be elected by the congregation. Mr. Jacob Thalman was the first President elected under the new scheme.

In May 1857 the President reported that further repairs to the synagogue would be needed, which would cost $75, and that the removal of the steeple, which was letting in the rain, would cost $25. Further estimates were asked for. Later it was agreed to go ahead and repair the synagogue, but the steeple would not be removed at this time.

Also in May of 1857 it was decided that a minyan would no longer be called for a *yahrzeit*, but that one should be assembled during the *shivah* period.

In August 1857, it was decided that on the High Holidays the *Kohanim* and *Leviim* do not have the right to be called up to the Torah first, but only when their names come up on the list, the members all being called up in order. This seems to be the first significant divergence from a strictly orthodox ritual even though it was not always carried out.

In September 1857, B. E. Jacobs applied for a job in Boston, which, if elected, he might have to assume before the High Holidays. Because of the excessive questioning and voiced displeasure of the congregation over his possible sudden, ill–timed, and unexpected departure, he resigned on the spot, but his resignation was not accepted. However, he apparently never got the call, because he stayed on for the High Holidays that year. In October the congregation received the first Torah of its own, another donation from the Young Men's Club. Its dedication was held during Sukkoth and the Rev. Jacobs officiated.

By November the congregation found itself getting deeper and deeper into financial trouble. At a special meeting of the congregation it was recommended that the two paid officials, B. E. Jacobs and

East Cliff Lodge, Ramsgate
24th Decr. 1850.

To,
The President & Secretary
of the Jewish Congregation
Newhaven
U. S. of America

Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 6th Instant which has been brought under the notice of the Committee of Deputies of the British Jews, and they empower me to thank you most cordially for your zealous co-operation in the unhappy case of the Mortara Family.

I have the honor to be,
Gentlemen,
Your faithful obd.t Servant,
Moses Montefiore
President

Letter from Sir Moses Montefiore to the Congregation Mishkan Israel, thanking them for their efforts in support of the case of the Mortara abduction in Italy. *(See p.31)* (COURTESY OF THE NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

Michael Milander be discharged. A vote was taken, and Jacobs was released by a vote of 20 to 6, but Milander was retained by a close vote of 14 to 13. Michael Milander seems to have been very well liked by the congregation, and of course, it didn't hurt that he could also function as a Cantor. Mr. Jacobs appealed the decision, but since he had already resigned once before, his appeal fell on deaf ears.

In January 1858 a second mortgage for one thousand dollars was taken on the synagogue, held by fourteen members of the congregation. The money was desperately needed in order to make the necessary loan payment to the Third Congregational Society. In February another loan for six thousand dollars was taken. The note was signed by fifteen members of the congregation, and had to be co-signed by all other members, including new ones as they were admitted.

In April 1858, Lewis Meininger was elected as Cantor for one year, with a salary of only $50. Mr. Israel Bretzfelder was elected President, and Mr. Jacob Kleiner was accepted as Shochet, but without pay. It is not clear whether or not this is the same Jacob Kleiner who had been a member of the congregation for many years, since that Jacob Kleiner was a jeweler. In the past, several applications had been received from a Jacob Kleiner for the position of Shochet, and he was from New York. From this time on, Mishkan Israel would no longer have a paid Shochet.

Prior to the High Holidays in 1858, it was decided to have two candelabra made, one for either side of the Ark. Together they were not to cost more than ten dollars. Also, Mr. Isaac Ullman was given permission to place his Torah, which he had purchased in Germany, in the Ark with the rest of the Torahs. Mr. Fried, from New York, was hired as a Cantor for the High Holidays.

In October a motion was made that each member receive his own plot in the cemetery. It was decided to write to New York to see if such a division would be permissible, and if it was, then a surveyor would be hired to stake out the cemetery into lots.

It was also agreed by the membership to proceed with the building of a mikvah, to cost no more than $600. A committee consisting of Jacob Smith, Isaac Nadler, and Isaac Ullman was directed to go to New York to look at a mikvah, and to have an architect

there draw up a plan. The mikvah would include three sitting rooms. Aaron Strauss was added to the committee in March 1859, and in April, Lewis Mandelbaum, Jacob Thalman, and Isaac Weil were added. A cost estimate was to be prepared.

In November of 1858 a letter was received from Sir Moses Montefiore regarding the Mortara affair, in which a young Jewish Italian boy was subjected to clandestine abduction and conversion. Mr. Jacob Heller was appointed to go to New York to find out more about this matter, and to "unite with other Israelites in New York, in order to induce the President of the United States to intervene in this matter." Sir Moses was then to be informed that everything possible to help in this case was being done. The reply to this letter from Moses Montefiore has been preserved in the Mishkan Israel archives.

In 1859 gas lamps were installed on either side of the Ark. Lewis Meininger was elected Cantor, Isaac Ullman was elected President, and the leaky steeple was still being discussed.

Meyer Kahn was elected President in 1860. Lewis Meininger was reelected Cantor, now with a salary of one hundred dollars, but with the provision, that he would become the 2nd Cantor if another cantor was hired during the course of the year.

During 1860 it was again decided to rewrite the Constitution and Bylaws. They also wanted to have an engraved marble plaque made for the entrance to the synagogue, and also one for the inside honoring Judah Touro, their benefactor. It was also during 1860 that Maier Zunder, four years after he founded Horeb Lodge and eight years after settling in New Haven, applied for membership in the congregation.

The leaky steeple, of course, was still leaking and still being discussed. A committee was finally appointed to review the problem with an architect, and to determine the cost of either taking it down or repairing it. Whatever the cost, one-half of the total would be paid, with interest, after one year, and the second half after two years, and also, the contractor would have to provide a guarantee.

On November 27, 1859, an organizing committee for the Board of Delegates of American Israelites was held in New York and Michael Milander and Benjamin Sugenheimer attended as official representa-

tives. This organization was founded by traditionalist leaders, in the wake of the Mortara Case, to protect Jewish rights around the world. Later they would merge with the reform Union of American Hebrew Congregations. But in April of 1860, without comment, the Secretary was directed to inform the Board of Delegates of American Israelites that effective immediately, the Congregation Mishkan Israel resigns from the organization.

Also during 1860, more steps were taken in the direction of reform. In April, Lewis Rothshild, Israel Bretzfelder, and Lewis Meyer were elected to serve on a committee to propose new synagogue regulations and new arrangements for prayers. When they presented their report, they recommended that certain additional prayers, contained only in the special prayer book for the Festivals (the *Machzor*), be omitted. They also recommended that the Song of Songs, Ruth, and Ecclesiastes no longer be said. In June additional minor changes were made, and the singing of *Yigdal* was added to the end of the service (in place of the *Shir Hayichud*). In July it was decided that *only* the Cantor may recite the Haftorah, and no one else.

Other matters were also taken care of during the summer. The old Ark that had been used in Todd's Hall was finally sold for five dollars. The buyer was the Congregation B'nai Scholom. Isaac Williams was to repair the yard, Maier Zunder, on his first official committee assignment, was directed to repair the toilet, and Jacob Mailhouse was appointed to speak with the owners about the removal of the pig pens next door to the synagogue.

In September 1860, An agreement was finally reached to repair the steeple. Many experts in the profession were consulted, and they all agreed that the steeple could be made tight and secure. It would be repaired and sheathed in tin. The work was eventually completed by E. Arnoldt & Co. and N. Countryman, at a total cost of $111.71.

In the fall, a serious search was begun for a competent man as Cantor, Preacher, and Teacher. In December, after reviewing several applications for the position, the Rev. A. Laser, from Baltimore, was given the contract, which was to start on January 1, 1861. One of his first assignments was to meet with Lewis Meininger (now the 2nd Cantor), Israel Bretzfelder, and Lewis Feldman to discuss the revi-

sion of the order of the prayers. The congregation was determined to continue along the path of reform.

There is no mention of the terrible situation that began to divide the nation in December of 1860, prior to the outbreak of civil war, but one of the last entries for that year reflects the sympathies of the congregation:

> **In consideration of the proclamation of the President of the United States and the Governor of the State of Connecticut, this coming Friday, January 4, [1861], will be kept as a day of penitential prayer, it was resolved, that the Board asks all of the members of the Congregation Mishkan Israel to attend the services on the said day, at 10:00 in the morning, and at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. [It is further] resolved, to ask the members to close their businesses on the said day, and to follow the example of the remainder of the citizens of the United States.**

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Rabbi Judah Wechsler, the spiritual leader of Congregation Mishkan Israel from 1873 until 1878. (FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EDITOR)

THE RABBI and the MINISTER
The Ecumenical Spirit at Work in Nineteenth Century New Haven

by Neil Hogan

ON MONDAY MORNING, January 10, 1876, as was its custom, the *Journal and Courier* reprinted summaries of some of the sermons that had been delivered in New Haven's churches the previous day.

One sermon selected for publication that day had been delivered by the Rev. George Lansing Taylor at the George Street Methodist Episcopal Church on the subject of the barren fig tree. Unlike the fig tree, Taylor's sermon bore almost immediate fruit for within a few weeks it led to an extraordinary ecumenical event that had the city and the whole state buzzing, an event described as the first of its kind in New England.

In his sermon, as outlined in the newspaper that Monday morning, Taylor suggested that the barren fig tree spoken of in one of the parables of Jesus "represented the Jewish people as a race and nation." "They were planted in Palestine, a beautiful country," explained the minister, "but instead of irradiating other nations with the light and knowledge which were given them, they kept these revela-

tions to themselves and treated others as 'Gentile dogs,' until finally they themselves became the scorn and football of the Gentiles. The Jews' conduct represents what all nations are doing who neglect God. The unfruitful tree is not the Jews alone, but the whole nation who has forgotten the Almighty."

One of the New Haveners who read about Taylor's sermon over his breakfast that Monday morning was Rabbi Judah Wechsler of Congregation Mishkan Israel. Needless to say, the minister's remarks about the Jewish nation did not help the rabbi's digestion. In fact, Wechsler was so incensed that later that day he took pen in hand and fired off a letter of protest to the newspaper.

The rabbi began his letter, which the paper printed on Thursday, January 13, by indicating that the paper's Monday morning sermon reprints usually did not merit his attention. "It is but seldom," he wrote, "that I read any abstracts of sermons published in your paper, or any other. But it just now happened that I glanced at the contents of a sermon which is published in your valuable paper, delivered by Rev. Dr. G. L. Taylor of the George street Methodist church. I wish to state first of all that I am really surprised that such a sermon as this has been delivered by the reverend gentleman, as I always considered Rev. Dr. Taylor a man of excellent culture."

Referring to the minister's comparison of the Jewish nation to the barren fig tree, Wechsler stated,

> If such a statement had been made by an ignorant, prejudiced man, I would pass it over in silence, repeating over the prayer which is contained in the New Testament, "Lord, forgive him, for he knows not what he is doing." But as it comes from such an erudite pastor as Dr. Taylor always seemed to me, I cannot pass it altogether in silence.
>
> I would say, without fear of contradiction, that instead of not "irradiating other nations with light and knowledge," the Jews have been at all times, and at all periods of authentic history, the banner-bearers of truth and divine laws. If it had not been for these very Jews, Dr. Taylor or any other preacher would not possess to-day the light to preach the gospel, as every moral principle is taken from that revelation promulgated to the children of Israel. They have been the

faithful custodians of that divine law, and were not willing to surrender it, no matter whether there came weal or woe...

The Jews were ever a liberal people in the fullest sense of the word. Moses engraved in his political constitution the words, "One law and one statute shall prevail and the native and the stranger shall enjoy equal rights." And in order to make this still more binding, he enjoined upon his people, "You shall not afflict a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The laws of the ancient commonwealth of Palestine were republican in every sense of the word, as toleration and equality was the great object of its government. Where and when did the Jews treat others as "Gentile dogs"? Has Dr. Taylor, perhaps, any newly discovered evidence to corroborate his inconsiderate statement? If so, I would like to know these sources for I have studied the history of my people as carefully and impartially as it is possible, but I have not discovered any proof that the Jews treated others as "Gentile dogs."

As obviously irate as he was, Rabbi Wechsler nonetheless ended his letter on a conciliatory note:

Dr. Taylor is a gentleman whom I otherwise much admire as I have always found him true to his work. I hope, therefore, he will pardon this just criticism of his sermon, as I thought it my duty to correct what I deem not warranted by actual facts. Let us be just and true. Our Jewish sages have declared, "Truth is the seal of God."

Taylor obviously also read the *Journal and Courier* over breakfast, for two days later the paper printed his reply to the rabbi's letter:

I am in the habit of doing myself the pleasure to look pretty thoroughly through your columns, and especially at what purports to be the sentiments of my brethren in the ministry, whether in the form of sermon reports, addresses, correspondence, or anything else.

I like to know what my ministerial brethren are saying and doing, and I have the feeling that anything like a fair report of what it has been worth their effort as learned men to prepare and say, will be worth my time to look over. Especially is this true of the opinions of those who do not in all things agree with me, one of whom is my

> learned and candid friend Rabbi Wechsler. I am very happy to find that he has, in one instance at least, been looking after me, as appears by his letter on my recent sermon.... With no teacher of religion in New Haven have my relations been more agreeable than with Dr. Wechsler and I trust nothing will transpire to make them otherwise. Men of true candor and moderation ought to get nearer together in heart, if not in opinion, by a discussion of their differences. I trust such will be the result of the Rabbi's letter and of the answer I beg to be allowed to make to it.

The minister then launched into a defense of his sermon, quoting at length from it. He had, indeed, said that the Jews

> ...Had arrogantly kept their revelations to themselves, looking upon them as their own exclusive possession as God's favored people, called and treated other nations as "Gentile dogs," and repeatedly fallen into idolatry.... But all this...only represents what the whole world and every individual human being has been doing since Adam fell and is still doing. The Jews were not the first backsliders, but the last."

Taylor quoted a number of ancient biblical and secular authorities to bolster his position, but, like the rabbi, his letter reached out in conciliation.

> Zeal against my brother, the Jew, had no place in my motives in the sermon, and has none in this letter. We Gentiles and Christians will never be purified from our own sins by twitting the Jew of his, ancient or modern....

Finally, the minister stated,

> I cannot better conclude this note than to invite, as I now do publicly and most sincerely and cordially, Dr.Wechsler to occupy my pulpit on any Sunday morning he may please to name and preach to my people the word of God as it shall be given him by the Spirit.

On January 18, the paper printed Rabbi Wechsler's response. The rabbi still objected to the minister's use of the words "Gentile

dog," saying they were "not in the least connected with Jewish history, or in any manner recognized by any great scholar of the past or of the present."

However, regarding the minister's invitation, Wechsler wrote,

> I kindly accept with the same kind feelings as it has been tendered to me. It will afford me an opportunity to give a better explanation of the common ground which we occupy than any statement I could make here. All the minor arrangements I leave to my friend Rev. Dr. Taylor. In the meantime may the sentiment by our motto, as uttered by Abraham, "Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren."

Thus it was that on Sunday morning, January 30, 1876, a Jewish rabbi, apparently for the first time in New Haven history, mounted the pulpit of a Christian church. "The George street M.E. church was filled to excess yesterday morning," commented the *Evening Register* the next day, "the occasion being the delivery of a discourse by the Jewish Rabbi Rev. Dr. Wechsler, his occupancy of the pulpit...being brought about through a genial and fraternal theological controversy..."

The occasion was a clergyman's dream come true. The paper continued:

> ...It was apparent early that the congregation was to be of marked size, far exceeding the seating capacity of George street church, and despite the introduction of extra seats in the aisles and other industrious work to accommodate the constant flow of newcomers, hundreds gave it up and retired.
>
> The occupancy of a Methodist pulpit by a Jewish Rabbi never happening before, it is said, in New England, has elicited notice from the press of other cities, and is certainly a rare circumstance.... Pastor Taylor is quite well known in Methodist circles as a frequent contributor to the leading Methodist journals, and Rev. Dr. Wechsler has achieved an enviable place among those who minister in Jewish faith, hence additional interest was awakened.

Rev. Taylor introduced the rabbi with a defense of his own action of inviting him to speak. The minister said,

> ...It is not, therefore, through any maudlin heterodoxy, but purely for the sake of true toleration and catholic charity that I take this position. Not as a disguised backslider, but as a most vigorous and pronounced believer in the whole length and breadth of Christian truth do I stretch out my hand to my brother of the race of Abraham, who returns my grasp in the same spirit.

Rabbi Wechsler then delivered his sermon:

> My friends, you have perhaps all read the correspondence which passed between me and your learned pastor through the public press. We have met each other on the most friendly terms, as it should be; especially as religious teachers. It is but natural that we often differ on certain points and subjects, but at all times we should be willing to adjust differences of opinions in the spirit of conciliation and true liberality. Our charity to others who entertain different views of religion should be as broad and comprehensive as the universe itself, which is guided and directed by one great Lawgiver. The Lord causes his sun to shine upon all, the rain to fall. As the great Psalmist expressed himself, "Thou, O God, openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of all thy creatures."
>
> Let me therefore state here at once that the profound regard and esteem I have entertained for your minister since it has been my pleasure to form his acquaintance has not been the least changed by this our controversy, but I am even sanguine that it will strengthen still more these ties of good will and friendship. I claim the greatest gift and privilege which man possesses is the free exercise of his belief and convictions. Let it be always enjoyed unrestrained, that there may be developed a feeling of brotherhood to remember the glorious word of the inspired prophet, "Have we not all one God; has not the same Father created us; why should we not love one another and not violate the covenant of our Father?
>
> We have made—I rejoice in saying it—great progress the last few years in spreading liberal sentiments. The narrow lines of sectarianism which formerly separated man from his fellow men be-

come more and more extinct. The practical aim of true religion is now better understood than ever before. There is a true cosmopolitan spirit which augurs well for the future.

The religion in its real meaning signifies love and union; hence, what separates and draws lines of distinction between the different creeds and nationalities is not the religion of the Bible, no matter by whom or whose authority it is expounded. In the kind and scholarly rejoinder which your able pastor has made to my objections to a certain term used, he has kindly invited me to occupy this pulpit on a given Sunday—and to use his own words—to preach the word of God to this honored congregation "as it shall be given to me by the Spirit." I have accepted without the least hesitation, believing, as I do, that it may have a tendency to bring us nearer together in understanding, the great aim of practical work of religion. But let no one, not even the most zealous and prescribed Christian feel the least uneasy and alarmed that I, a Jewish Rabbi, am occupying to-day your pulpit, but let us rather rejoice together in the spirit of the sacred bard, "Behold how pleasant and delightful it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The *Springfield Republican* and other papers, as you perhaps will have noticed, considers this, my occupying a pulpit in a Methodist church, an extraordinary occurrence, even predicting that the end of the world is come to pass, for it remarks, "Such an interchange of Unitarians and Jewish Rabbis has happened before, but not between Evangelical ministers." To this statement let me remark here that the papers are mistaken. Already in the year 1857, I was invited to preach at a Methodist church in Illinois, and accepted. But I have done more. At my former residence, Columbus, Ohio, I have spoken in two Methodist churches, where I raised a considerable sum of money, when those houses of worship were dedicated to the service of the Most High.

At one time there was a remarkable incident connected with my humble effort. There was one church member who was anything but liberal with his money. He had subscribed but little and the appeal of the pastor, presiding elder, class leader and others had been in vain. But as soon as I had spoken a favorable change was manifested. Some of my own people as well as myself had subscribed a liberal sum for the purpose of liquidating the debt. The brother who could not hitherto be prevailed upon to subscribe remarked as fol-

lows, "I thank the Lord that my heart has been softened. All the speeches have made no impression upon me to be liberal. But I could not stand this Jewish Rabbi. He has converted me. He has converted me. I must subscribe." And let me remark here that he subscribed very liberally for the good purpose named, which made such a deep impression upon the audience that they followed his example so that not much of the church debt remained unpaid.

You will therefore see, my friends, that the *Springfield Republican* must not have read an account of those meetings. It will thus be seen that my appearance before you this morning is not so extraordinary after all. Let us fervently hope that everywhere in this glorious country the bond of union and fellowship may be strengthened, that all prejudices between sects and nationalities may cease; let us hasten the time which is predicted by the inspired prophet, "There will be but one shepherd and one flock of sheep."

But now the question comes to me: What subject shall I discuss here, in which you will be interested? I will profit by the good advice given to me by your very learned pastor: "I will give expression to my thoughts as they shall be given to me by the Spirit."

As our controversy has originated in a term used which seemed to me objectionable, it may, perhaps, be interesting to you if I discuss here, as briefly as possible, the relations of ancient as well as modern Judaism, guided by the words of sacred Scripture. Michah 4, verse 2, "And many nations shall come and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, for He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths for the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

It does not matter, my friends, from what aspect you may look upon Israel, the chosen people of God, you must agree with me in saying here, to introduce my subject that at all times and under all circumstances the Israelites have been living witnesses of God's wonderful Providence. With more than an empty meaning the sons of Jacob have affirmed the truth, "The flower fades, the grass withers, but the word of God remains forever." Let all unbelievers come to explain away by any sound argument the preservation of Israel among the nations of the earth. The most powerful nations have long passed into oblivion; kingdoms and empires mighty and great have long since been destroyed, but Israel has ever been memorable in the pages of history, to establish the truth that the great principles and

laws which were promulgated to the Hebrew nation have not been superseded by any doctrines and creeds.

It is a mistaken idea that is entertained by many that in consequence of Israel's transgression and as a matter of consequence in not being willing to accept another religion, the ancient people had been dispersed over the world and then became the scorn and football of the nations. Such a view, I maintain, cannot be substantiated if we appeal to impartial history and sound reasoning. Let me ask you here: Is it not stated in sacred scripture, "The son shall not suffer for the sins of the father, and the father for the sins of the son, but every one shall be held responsible for his own actions." Should not the judge of this whole universe execute justice? Can then, I ask here, the present Israel be held responsible for any transgressions committed thousands of years ago? But supposing for a moment theological speculation would be indulged in to grant it, another question would arise. Why are not other nations equally punished? Israel has atoned for its short-comings by many noble deeds, by acts of charity and benevolence, by domestic virtue, by being the acknowledged advocate and supporter of liberal principles, which every candid observer will admit.

On Sinai's height a light was kindled which illuminated the whole world, which even today shines forth in all its splendor, in all its dazzling glory. To Israel was revealed those ten words, upon which the very fabric and superstructure of civilized society is based. What is all ancient philosophy compared with this divine proclamation? Let those ten words be removed to-day from the statute book and code of laws for the better government of society, and what remains to secure the administration of justice and to secure in general the security and well being of society?

The whole world is indebted to Israel, as I freely assert, for this inestimable gift, for it must be admitted that Israel has guarded these laws as the very apple of the eye. It was the aim and purpose of the great lawgiver, Moses, to make these great truths universally known; therefore he brought them down from the mountain written on two tables of stone, that all may not only hear but read them "to practice and observe these ordinances." It is true there were periods and occasions when a large multitude miscomprehended the aim of these divine laws, but the Lord raised always men among their own

midst who in glowing speeches and words of eloquence "told the house of Israel their sins and the sons of Jacob their transgressions."

Israel as a nation was nevertheless the faithful custodian of these divine laws. In the struggle of their national existence, in the heat of their bloody battles, how often do we read the significant words, "And the ark of the covenant they took along in front before them," defending it with greater solicitude than even their life.

Israel went as the missionary of the Most High into all parts of the world. You can scarcely point to a spot today where they are not represented. Israel took along with it everywhere these divine laws, firmly resolved to impart the heavenly light of truth to all the nations of the earth, and with love, gentleness and charity it greeted every sect, but alas! how often were the Israelites received unkindly; nay, how often they became the bondsmen of the nations.

I will not dwell here upon the dark periods of the Middle Ages when often the only choice which was granted the Israelites was to select either death or another religion. But was there a general despair among the sons of Jacob during these dark ages of history? By no means. Israel believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the justice of the cause it defended and yielded not its religion and principles, no matter what had been the consequences. Onward and forward it pursued its wandering even beyond the mighty ocean, remembering the words, "The floods have lifted up their voices, the floods have lifted up their waves. The Lord on High is mightier than the noise of the many waters, yes, than the mighty waves of the sea."

The words spoken unto Israel at the burning Sinai, "You shall be unto me a people of priests and a holy nation," have very often been misunderstood. Many perceive in this expression an exclusiveness which augurs not favorably to a full recognition of other nations. But that cannot be corroborated by any good reasons. This term used should stimulate Israel to greater exertions in the interest of humanity. It should ever impress every true son of Abraham with a vivid conception of his high calling and the responsibility resting upon him.

Israel has accomplished a noble service in the cause of humanity for it has ever guarded in its purity those Divine laws. It would not admit that one word or even one letter should be added, or left out from the whole law to change thereby the meaning to suit a certain creed or sect. It has still a great mission to fulfill for not yet

the contest is ended; it is true where light and civilization have progressed the morning has dawned and thanks be rendered to God that the days of religious persecution are over, but there is still a struggle going on on the one side where dogmas are preached as the essence of religion and on the other side where under the name of science, the existence of God is denied or explained away under different names, materialism, evolution, development and other definitions.

Israel must fearlessly oppose all such theories to bring about the glorious time "when mankind will be redeemed from all errors and fictions, and united before God in justice, peace and philanthropy." On its banners must be written the words of our text, "The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem." The inspired prophets, and when they ceased to exist, the great teachers and sages, urged ever the chosen people to falter not in the great work of spreading truth and righteousness, "That knowledge might fill the earth as the waters cover the sea." How significant is the inspiring word of the prophet, "But you, son of Jacob, as I have chosen, shall be my witness, said the Lord." He is the first and the last and He gives His glory to no other. Ever and again Israel was exhorted to walk in the light of the Lord.

The office of High Priest, as long as the temple stood in Jerusalem, was a type of Israel's mission which it should assume among the nations of the earth when there should no longer sacrifices be required and no priest to enter the holiness of holiness. The Lord had long before the destruction of the temple promised, "The spirit of a contrite heart He will not reject," and that obedience was more acceptable to Him than "burnt offerings and minding Him more pleasing than the blood of rams and bullocks."

All prophets predicted a steady development and progress by which Israel should be surrounded among the nations of the earth. The Psalmist states when the second temple had been laid in ashes and the last vestige of Israel's nationality had been destroyed there was great weeping and lamentation among those who had been eyewitnesses of this sad and mournful conflict, when they refused to be comforted. Then a great and celebrated teacher arose and addressed the deeply afflicted audience as follows, "Weep no longer, take new courage, for all is not lost. The ancient temple of Jerusalem can be replaced by minor sanctuaries, by noble deeds of charity and

benevolence, by walking uprightly before the Lord, by fearing and obeying His commandments."

The Lord has promised as it is written in the holy law, "Everywhere My name is called I will dwell among you and bless you." These words, as we are informed, made such a deep impression upon the audience that henceforth they looked altogether from a different aspect upon their new future. The form in Israel's religion, as everywhere else, was subject to changes, but the principles remained and should be binding forever. Israel should ever remember its history, that it might be impressed most forcibly with great lessons for its guidance in the future. Liberty and freedom should ever be its rallying cry to overcome every obstacle in the way.

Let me call your attention to some striking facts to convince you that Israel has been and is ever true to this great duty required. When the weekly Sabbath day is observed as a day of rest and holiness he is first of all reminded that he must grant rest, likewise to his "male and female servants and the stranger which is within his gates." And in his prayers he is to utter the beautiful words, "Thou shalt love the stranger for thou hast been a stranger in the land of Egypt." When he observes his holidays at the different seasons of the year, he again is required to again repeat the same words and even more explicitly, for he is to remember "the Levite, the stranger, the widow and the orphan" in commemoration that he has been a stranger in the land of Egypt. He is exhorted to practice the strictest integrity and honesty to all men, to use just weights and measures. Sacred scripture seeks to remind him of the fact that he has been a slave in the land of Egypt.

If it is made the Israelites duty to suffer not a brother to be waxen poor as to fall into decay without relieving him, he is again instructed to remember, "that the sojourner and the stranger as well as the native born may equally dwell and prosper in the land I the Lord thy God have given thee." These quotations could be augmented to a great extent if I deemed it necessary to prove still more the cosmopolitan spirit of Judaism, but I will only remark here that while other nations and sects have considered it in days of prosperity as a matter of pride to pass silently over the sufferings and unfavorable incidents of their history, Israel has not forgotten what has transpired during all ages of its existence. It has preserved carefully all relics with which there is connected any remains of the past. It has ever

taken new courage when its cause seemed dark, and gloried in the remembrance of the words, "Behold he sleeps and slumbers not, the guardian of Israel." It must therefore be obvious to every candid mind that Israel's religion was from its very commencement not of an exclusive character. Even the term "chosen people," if properly understood, will warrant this assertion. Israel was only insofar the chosen people of God as it was entrusted with the high mission to lead other nations in its path of truth and righteousness.

It is noticeable that we find in the book of Moses four kinds of expressions besides "the children of the Lord" which refer to the different nationalities and inhabitants in the land of Palestine. We meet with the words *Nochri*, *Ger*, *Toshab* and *Esroch*. Let us define their meanings. *Nochri* signifies a stranger who came there with no intention to become naturalized. The word has no other religious meaning. To come from a distant country signifies *Nochri*. *Ger* means foreigner, who desired also not to settle permanently in the country, but it was at least his intention to remain there for a considerable time. *Toshab* signifies a foreigner but who became naturalized to remain in the country and locate himself permanently. *Esroch* was understood to be a native born, according to the opinions of most learned men, referring to Israelites exclusively, but according to Reggio, the great linguist, having not merely referred to the native Israelites alone, but to all native born, no matter to what religion they belonged.

These different terms are all used now to teach a great moral law, upon which the ancient commonwealth was based, namely—equality and justice. Not as it had been in Egypt should be favorite classes, but there was the constitutional provision reading as follows: "You shall not oppress a stranger," referring to the different classes as I have explained, "and the native and the stranger shall enjoy equal rights and privileges." Who will not admire this liberal spirit thousands of years ago, when this very day the combat is not ended at every part of the world to contest for those same sacred rights.

The land of Palestine was open for every emigrant in the manner of these hospitable shores. This glorious country of ours receives with open arms every newcomer, who wishes to settle permanently or otherwise in any part of this extensive land. When the great temple of Jerusalem was dedicated to the God of Israel by King Solomon, this great king most fervently prayed on that occasion that

the Lord might be near to the stranger as well as the sojourner; that He should bless the land, every country and nationality. So no particular tenents were alluded to, but such a prayer and supplication was offered, which well in our day might be considered as a model prayer, which ought to be imitated.

Let those who believe that salvation can be found only within their narrow limits or prescribed dogmas study more than nature of God, as Solomon, the great philosopher, had comprehended Jehovah the loving father of all his children. At every feast of tabernacles it was required in ancient Israel that, in addition to the usual sacrifices, seventy rams should be offered in the temple of Jerusalem for the special benefit of all sects and especially non-Israelites.

Israel's religion should fill every heart with charity and forebearance. The criminal code which was in force as long as Israel had its own state government was prepared with great care and with special reference to afford every accused an impartial trial and just verdict. The tribunal of justice was charged with the most responsible duties. The wisest and best men of Israel were selected to discharge these functions. In case that a man had slain his fellow man unintentionally and without any evil purpose he could not be summarily dealt with, but could flee to the cities of refuge, where he had to remain till after the death of the high priest.

Zion, Israel's oldest home, was therefore, as we have sufficiently shown, the original abode of freedom and liberality. There have been books written in which it is claimed that Moses had borrowed his laws largely from the Egyptian priests. But I ask here, where in all Egypt did we find such liberal and just laws as I have already named? "Only the laws of God are just and gladden the heart; His ordinances are true and remain forever." Imagine for a moment how thousands of years ago, when spiritual darkness enveloped yet the eastern horizon, the same principles were recognized by the Hebrew people upon which this glorious Union has been founded by patriotic men of the Revolution. I will demonstrate this still more by a few other illustrations.

Zion was free. If a slave had fled from another country into the land of Palestine, he could not be surrendered; as soon as he approached the soil of Palestine, he was free. He could live wherever he pleased, could follow any occupation it seemed best for him to sup-

port himself and his family. Nobody had a right to insult him or hurt his feelings by a single expression.

Brothers, I am aware the correctness of my assertion will be doubted in certain quarters. The question might be asked with propriety, Is it not true that in the land of Palestine slavery was recognized? I would reply to this question that actual slavery did not exist in the land of Palestine. In the Hebrew language, there is no word which is the same as is expressed in the Greek by the word "slave." "*Ebed*" is the Hebrew term which is often translated as meaning "slave," but which is wrong in every particular. "*Ebed*" signifies "to work" as a working man, which is surely not a dishonorable expression. This word is ever used as referring to the most distinguished title, for Moses was called servant of the Lord. Slaves according to the manner of the Romans and Greeks who had no rights and principles, Judaism never recognized. Perpetual servitude was not even lawful. During the time the servant was bound to labor, the Israelite was especially commanded, "Thou shall not rule over him with harshness."

Zion was free. Therefore Israel should ever remember the fact that Amalek, the great foe it possessed pursued the weary people at the time when they had scarcely been redeemed from Egyptian bondage. Zion was free. Every facility should be fully developed, every facility properly used. Nothing should interrupt the vegetation and growth of plants, therefore, it was prohibited in Israel to sow mixed seed, as naturally one kind would interfere with the growth of the other.

Zion was humane and just even to the most humble laboring man, as it was a law in Israel to pay on the same day his wages, for it was presumed that he might need it for the support of himself and family. Zion was humane even to the defenseless prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the Israelites as stated, "Thou shalt not sell them for money, nor make them serviceable to you." Zion was just not merely to man, but also to animals, as stated, "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and ass at the same time, for one is stronger than the other."

Zion was truly charitable. Its productions everyone should enjoy. It was a law in old Israel that no after-harvest should be held, neither should the corners of the field be reaped for the grand reason given, "That the widow, the orphan, the Levite and the stranger will

likewise live among you and enjoy of the goodly land which the Lord thy God has given thee."

Israel has therefore a glorious past. From the very time when Abraham built first a temple to the living God, between "Beth El and Hai," to the present day the Israelite has ever faithfully adhered to these great and inestimable rights, to which I have but briefly called your attention. It is only to be regretted that the true aim of Judaism is not generally understood.

The Talmud is for many, even acknowledged scholars, a sealed book. Its profound philosophy, its ethics, sound logic, and beauty of diction are therefore not appreciated as they should be. Small as well as great men have very often miscomprehended certain idioms of the language of terms in the way of allegory. This has given rise to misconstruction of whole sentences. It has, therefore, been very [often] stated, even published, that the Israelite, according to his creed, was to hate other sects. No proofs whatever can be furnished to substantiate this assertion. We will, however, freely admit that there have been books written whose authors were not liberally inclined. But for the honor of Judaism, it may be stated that such books were never considered as an authority. Such men were not inspired, but if we consider the time and place when these books were written we will rather find an excuse for any illiberal expression used. During the dark ages of religious persecution could it be expected that these writings should not indicate the cries of woe, of anguish and despair by which they were surrounded?

Instead of censuring single expressions which every Israelite abhors today, we rather admire the charitable spirit of these authors, under the circumstances. Israel's forbearance and generosity will be better understood the more its literature is studied. A better acquaintance with Jewish history would remove many prejudices and bring us nearer together that we might explain with our text, "From Zion goeth forth the law and the word of God from Jerusalem."

I have thus far but inadequately illustrated the principles of ancient Judaism. It remains only for me now to direct but very briefly your attention to modern Judaism. Ancient and modern Judaism differ but little. They form a solid unit. The Israelites over the globe are essentially the same. They recognize all the same binding truths. Sabbath after Sabbath the same *Parashah* is read at all synagogues and temples. The progress of time has not obliterated any ancient

landmark of Judaism. But modern Judaism recognizes a steady development and a loftier conception of its truths.

It is our firm conviction that the form changes, but the spirit remains. Modern Judaism clings therefore not any longer with tenacity to ceremonies and cannons which were well applicable at a certain time or age, but are today less suitable. While we have retained in the liturgy many of the soul inspiring prayers of our pious fathers, we have removed from it every word and expression which is not in harmony with our emotions and feelings. We have taken down our harp from the willows of Babylon to sing again the songs of Zion. We come before the Lord with thanksgiving that Israel's cause has not languished by any oppression from without or within.

The progressive Israelite no longer prays for a return unto the land of Palestine and the rebuilding of the temple with its sacrifice; neither for a personal Messiah to come. We believe there is no retrogression but a program which we must follow. The lofty expressions of the prophets referring to the glorious time of the future are emblematical of our high calling which we have assumed among the nations of the earth. The whole habitable world must become a holy Jerusalem where justice, truth and liberty are to reign supremely. The names of the different sects and desire of one claiming superiority over the other must altogether cease and that more noble and lofty expression—humanity—must be substituted.

The word of God must go forth from Zion to unite mankind into one great brotherhood. The spirit of the divine laws must enlighten every soul to impress vividly with the conviction that the same destiny awaits us all. We are all gifted with an immortal soul. The Lord punishes and rewards every one not according to his belief, but according to his actions.

Let us united render praise and thanks to Almighty God that we live in this age of progress and in this favored land. "Old things have passed away and new things have become true." The Jew and the Gentile no longer assume a hostile attitude to each other, and with the noble martyred President Lincoln, we exclaim, "With malice to none, with charity to all."

Let every one work out his own salvation as it seems best in his eyes. Let every uncharitable expression between the different sects and nationalities forever cease, in the sense of a great modern poet, "Man is man after all." Let us hail with delight these glad tid-

ings of good of the different denominations in this our beloved city, the seat of learning and intelligence.

Let the many students who go forth from the college or seminary remember what has happened this very day, that an opportunity was given to me to occupy a pulpit at a Methodist church; let them not forget the kind introductory remarks of the able, gentlemanly pastor in charge for I am sure it will be but productive of the highest good. In this great centennial year of our existence let us with becoming dignity and self-pride unfurl our flag and pray most fervently that the Lord may bless and prosper this great nation that He may guide and direct the Ship of State that it may ever pursue its course onward and forward to the harbor of peace and prosperity. Let us remember those brave and patriotic men of the Revolution; how they have contested and bought with their precious blood these sacred rights and privileges which we today enjoy. I am sure no sect will remember this more than the Israelites, for here in this glorious country we feel more than ever before the blessings of liberty.

In conclusion, I return my sincere thanks to this audience for your kind attention to my remarks; but especially to my friend, the scholarly pastor of this church. May our intercourse in the future ever be of so friendly a nature as it has been in the past. May this day have a tendency to promote charity among all classes of society; that we might accord in the beautiful words of the sacred poet, "This day the Lord has made; come let us rejoice together."

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JOINING THE CONGREGATION
The Path to Women's Equality at Congregation Mishkan Israel

by Beth S. Wenger

WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS played an important role in the American synagogue. In the nineteenth century, women helped to build young congregations by raising funds, administering charity, and performing practical chores that sustained and strengthened the synagogue. Beginning in loosely-organized ladies' societies and graduating to Sisterhoods, Jewish women expanded their role in synagogue life as they acquired greater confidence and leadership skills. While congregations welcomed and depended upon women's contributions, most were reluctant to grant them full membership and voting rights. At New Haven's first synagogue, Congregation Mishkan Israel, women made gradual but persistent inroads into the temple power structure. Complete equality in ritual practice and synagogue governance took several generations to achieve. The sustained efforts of Mishkan Israel women along with the acceptance of new gender norms within the congregation were required before women became full partners in their synagogue.

New Haven's first Jewish women's society was not officially associated with Congregation Mishkan Israel, but most of its

members came from the temple. Organized in 1853, Ahavas Achos (Sisterly Love), performed the traditional Jewish duties of *Bikur Cholim*, visiting the sick, and *Levayet Hamet*, attending the dead. The twenty women who founded Ahavas Achos pledged to care personally for the needs of fellow Jews, collected dues to support that effort, and contributed to worthy causes including aid for East European Jewish immigrants. In 1862, the society used its funds to build New Haven's first *Mikvah*. Ahavas Achos performed many valuable communal functions, but envisioned women as behind-the-scenes contributors to Jewish life. For its first twenty years, the society was led by male presidents, the husbands of members. Not until the 1870s did women assume the roles of officers and decision-makers within their own organization. By the twentieth century, as the New Haven Jewish community grew larger and more sophisticated, the society began to play a less prominent role in caring for the personal needs of fellow Jews. In 1917, Ahavas Achos chose a more American name, the Daughters of '53, and became primarily a social and charitable organization.[1]

While Ahavas Achos had never been formally affiliated with Mishkan Israel, the temple benefited from the services of several women's societies identified exclusively with the congregation. In the late nineteenth century, Mishkan Israel minutes refer to a host of women's organizations, including the Ladies Sewing Society, Ladies Temple Aid Society, and Ladies of Mishkan Israel Aid Society. These associations provided clothing and financial assistance to East European immigrants arriving in New Haven and also contributed significantly to maintenance costs at Mishkan Israel. In 1895, Mishkan Israel had begun construction of its Orange Street Temple and women devised various means to help finance the new building. The Ladies Sewing Society, for example, organized an organ recital which raised over four hundred dollars for the synagogue. While their programs were modest, Mishkan Israel's small women's associations regularly contributed hundreds of dollars to the congregation. In 1909, when synagogue finances were strained, the Ladies of Mishkan Israel Aid Society donated one thousand dollars to help pay the mortgage debt on the Orange Street Temple.[2]

Despite their important financial and service role in the temple, Mishkan Israel women remained content to meet the synagogue's needs without aspiring to positions of power within the congregation. More often than not, after they had raised money for the temple, women allowed the all-male synagogue Board to decide how the funds should be spent. The Mishkan Israel Board always praised the women for their devoted service, but never allowed them to participate in the decision-making process. Until 1904, women were not even permitted to attend the temple's annual meetings. In that year, congregational minutes report:

> A novelty of this year's meeting consisted in a general invitation to the ladies of the congregation to appear, who attended in goodly numbers and took deep interest in the proceedings.[3]

In sum, Mishkan Israel gladly received and even expected women's contributions, but still considered them little more than a "novelty" in synagogue government.

By the 1910s, loosely-structured ladies' societies were replaced by the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood, which quickly became *the* women's voice within the congregation. The Sisterhood represented a more sophisticated form of organization, shaping its own agenda and electing its own officers. While the ladies'societies had divided their attention among relief efforts, communal need, and temple activities, the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood focused exclusively upon synagogue affairs. By the opening decades of the century, New Haven's Jewish community had produced a multitude of organizations; the Sisterhood decided "to avoid misunderstanding and duplication" by relinquishing most charitable work to the Federated Charities and the bulk of purely philanthropic activities to the National Council of Jewish Women. The revision of duties reduced the scope of work somewhat, but allowed Mishkan Israel women to enhance their role within the congregation. The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, organized under the auspices of the Reform movement in 1913, also helped to build the prestige of the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood while providing a source of support and ideas. Unlike its predecessors, the Sisterhood became not only a service organization,

but also a vehicle for women to gain a working voice at Mishkan Israel.[4]

While the Sisterhood defined itself as a religiously-based organization associated exclusively with Mishkan Israel, it continued to play an active role in communal affairs. In the name of religious duty and Jewish values, Sisterhood women regularly participated in both Jewish and secular activities. The Sisterhood sponsored a Girl Scout Troop and held an annual formal dance for Yale students. The women took a special interest in Yale's Jewish students, often inviting young men to their homes. During World War I, women joined the patriotic spirit that swept the country and the congregation. The Mishkan Israel Sisterhood lent its full energies to the war effort, purchasing Liberty Bonds and organizing sewing circles. Every other week, Sisterhood members gathered to sew garments for the Red Cross. As one Sisterhood representative boasted, "The Zeal with which our members are working shows we are all believers in 'preparedness.'" World War I provided all Mishkan Israel members with an opportunity to demonstrate their belonging and allegiance as American citizens. For Sisterhood members, the war required unprecedented levels of organization and financial management. The extent of the Sisterhood's war-time activities and the growing sophistication of their organization bolstered women's confidence while improving their leadership skills. The 1910s were a decade of growth and expansion for the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood from which women emerged more experienced and increasingly assertive.[5]

The 1920s marked a peak period in women's activism at Mishkan Israel. The experience gained during the war, as well as feminist ideas popularized during the suffrage campaign, combined to encourage women's demands for rights within the congregation. While it is difficult to determine the extent of feminist consciousness among Mishkan Israel women, Sisterhood programming indicates that women were interested in learning more about the feminist movement. In 1922, for example, the Sisterhood organized a lecture and discussion program exploring the extent of popular anti-feminist backlash. Whether or not Mishkan Israel women had been converted to the feminist cause, they demonstrated quite clearly that they would no longer be satisfied with a behind-the-scenes role in synagogue

affairs. As active participants in the temple, women demanded to be granted full status as members. In June of 1922, the Mishkan Israel Board reported that it had received a joint resolution from the Sisterhood and the National Council of Jewish Women insisting that women be admitted as Board members. In October, the temple Board took the first step in meeting their demands, voting that "wives, adult daughters, and sisters of members...be admitted to full membership." Two months later, the Board further resolved that "women, whether members or not, shall be eligible to appointment on any committee or to the Board of Trustees of the Congregation." Immediately after the resolution was passed, Rose Osterweis became the first female member elected to the Mishkan Israel Board.[6]

The admission of women to the Board was not welcomed by all congregants. Two years after the decision, the Board considered an amendment to revoke the women's right to serve on the Board of Trustees while allowing them to remain eligible for synagogue membership. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the proposal indicated that some congregants did not support women's newly acquired rights. In fact, the Board of Trustees had flatly refused certain demands made by Mishkan Israel women. When women requested representation on the Sunday School Board, the synagogue voted "to defer action on the request for the present." The Sisterhood had also asked that its president be granted a permanent appointment on the Board of Trustees. The Board denied that request, explaining that the Sisterhood president would be allowed to appear at Board meetings whenever the need arose. The 1920s did not produce a complete revision of women's status at Mishkan Israel, but significant changes were accomplished. Women succeeded in gaining rights as congregational and Board members and they built the Sisterhood into a thriving organization. By the close of the decade, the Sisterhood not only worked to meet the congregation's needs, but also sponsored programs that directly addressed women's issues. In less than twenty years, the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood had grown from a service organization into a true representative of women and a vital force in congregational life.[7]

The interwar years brought a new tenor of women's activities to Mishkan Israel. In Reform congregations throughout the country,

leaders voiced concern that the synagogue had become a female province, with the male laity playing a less active role in religious life. Men still predominated as officers and financial managers, but women significantly outnumbered men in synagogue attendance. As Abba Hillel Silver, a leading Reform rabbi explained, the "essential work of the liberal synagogue was largely in the hands of women and ecclesiastics." In fact, the Brotherhoods were created to draw men back into the temple, with the hope of duplicating the success of Sisterhoods. Like women in other Reform synagogues, Mishkan Israel Sisterhood members regularly filled the temple's pews and classrooms and continued to serve the congregation's needs. At the same time, the Sisterhood took an independent course in choosing issues relevant to its members. Since the 1920s Mishkan Israel women had been concerned with the birth control campaign. As one Sisterhood representative explained, "It is felt that at such a crucial time women should be more informed about birth Control Legislation." Mishkan Israel women had long considered political activity a legitimate part of their duties. In 1941 the Sisterhood publicly endorsed the campaign for legalized birth control in Connecticut.[8]

Despite the fact that the Sisterhood reached new heights in programming during the 1930s and 1940s, Mishkan Israel women made few gains in terms of membership and voting rights. The far-reaching changes instituted in the 1920s were followed by a period of relative stability in women's status with the congregation. The financial and spiritual strains of the Great Depression and World War II were partially responsible for turning members' attention away from women's rights. Moreover, Mishkan Israel's history reveals a general trend for peak periods of change to be punctuated by intervals of consolidation. While women gained little ground in the interwar years, they were relentless in voicing their demands to representation on the temple Board. In the 1920s synagogue leaders had refused the Sisterhood's request that its president be granted a permanent position on the board of Trustees. Throughout the thirties and forties, the Sisterhood repeatedly brought that same demand before the Board. Each time, Board members conceded only that Sisterhood (and Brotherhood) presidents would be invited to participate in discussions pertaining to their organizations. Despite

the disappointing responses they received, Mishkan Israel women held fast to the political strategy of persistent lobbying.[9]

In the 1950s women saw the fruits of their labors, as Mishkan Israel entered another period of significant improvements in women's status within the congregation. The temple had granted women membership privileges in the 1920s, but had yet to extend full voting rights to female congregants. In 1950 Board members reported that in accordance with a recommendation of the Executive Board of the Sisterhood, "they had passed an amendment to include the wives of members into full Temple membership including the right to vote." Eight years later the Sisterhood finally won the thirty-year campaign to make its president a full voting member of the synagogue Board. In 1958 the congregation revised its by-laws to allow both the Brotherhood and Sisterhood presidents to serve and cast ballots as Board members. These changes in synagogue government were part of Mishkan Israel's broader attempt to distribute power more evenly among congregants. The growing democratization of congregational life brought Mishkan Israel women their first opportunity to participate as full partners in the temple they had helped to build.[10]

In the 1950s, Mishkan Israel women gained full membership and voting rights, but by the 1970s, they wanted to be properly and proportionately represented. No longer satisfied to have a single female voice speaking for all Mishkan Israel women, the Sisterhood insisted on fair representation. Women articulated their position with a new tone of urgency, influenced and encouraged by the burgeoning feminist movement. In 1972, the Sisterhood strenuously objected when Mishkan Israel nominated only one woman to the Board of Trustees. Angrily denouncing the move, a Sisterhood representative told synagogue leaders:

> Only one member of the Sisterhood...has been placed in nomination for the important position as a member of the Board of Trustees for the coming three (3) years. This is very disheartening. As you well know, the Sisterhood is a vital part of the Temple family and without your recognizing the capabilities of our Sisterhood women, you are downgrading their competence.[11]

The language of the 1960s women's rights movement echoed in the protests of the Sisterhood. By the early seventies, Mishkan Israel women had grown decidedly more vocal and militant in demanding a greater voice in synagogue affairs. "Women are not happy doing menial tasks at the Temple," declared one Sisterhood member. "In other words they no longer want to do the dirty laundry or be considered second class citizens of their congregations." Feminist consciousness had undoubtedly influenced Sisterhood members and encouraged them to assert their demands with unprecedented force. Mishkan Israel women often had to pressure the congregation to move forward on women's issues. Yet, by the 1970s, temple members had also begun to recognize women's rights within synagogue government. In 1976, for the first time in its history, Mishkan Israel elected a woman, Alberta Roseman, as president of the congregation.[12]

Interestingly, women's access to synagogue government preceded their inclusion in religious and ritual practice. As part of the Reform movement, Mishkan Israel had always taken great pride in recognizing women's equality in Judaism. Like other Reform congregations, Mishkan Israel eliminated the traditional morning prayer in which men thanked God for not creating them as women. Synagogue leaders consistently praised Jewish women as innately religious beings, more spiritually inclined than men. However, laudatory remarks about Jewish women did not translate easily into tangible alterations in ritual practice. Although Mishkan Israel had introduced the family pew as early as 1864, abandoning the practice of seating men and women separately during religious services, the congregation had never allowed women to participate fully in synagogue ritual. A woman's religious duties were expected to be carried out within the home—by lighting candles, observing the Sabbath, and transmitting Judaism to her children. Unlike the persistent campaign that the Sisterhood had waged to gain access to synagogue government, Mishkan Israel women voiced little opposition to their role in ritual practice. Until the 1960s, no attempts were made to correct women's exclusion from synagogue rites.[13]



Rose Osterweis, the first woman elected to the Board of Trustees of Congregation Mishkan Israel, December 1922. (COURTESY OF RUTH OSTERWEIS SELIG)



Alberta Roseman, the first woman to be elected president of Congregation Mishkan Israel, 1976. (COURTESY OF CONGREGATION MISHKAN ISRAEL, PHOTO REPRODUCTION BY CARL NEWLIN)

In 1967, Mishkan Israel first considered instituting Bat Mitzvah celebrations in the temple. The Bat Mitzvah question was not raised by Mishkan Israel women, but rather by a Boston family that had relocated in New Haven. The daughter of the Boston couple had prepared for her Bat Mitzvah before the move to New Haven, and the family wanted to celebrate the occasion at Mishkan Israel. Rabbi Robert Goldburg supported the idea, maintaining that "a girl who was willing to go through the same training as a boy should not be discriminated against." The ritual committee also recommended "the Bas Mitzvah program...for those girls who fulfill the requirement." However, synagogue leaders were reluctant to sanction Bat Mitzvah celebrations and tabled a motion to institute the practice. Board members conceded only that girls would be allowed to read Torah at Junior Congregation. The Mishkan Israel Board claimed that the temple's cantor and teachers would not have time to prepare both girls and boys in the necessary liturgy. Some members also worried that girls might leave the religious school after Bat Mitzvah and not remain for confirmation—a common practice among boys. The Board deliberated the Bat Mitzvah question for five years before reaching a decision. Finally, in 1972, the Board announced that it would "endorse [the] principle of Bat Mitzvah" and fund additional teaching and tutoring for girls. For the first year, Bat Mitzvahs were conducted only on Friday nights. However, the "opposition received from a number of the congregational members" forced the Board to schedule all Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations on Saturday mornings.[14]

During the same year that Mishkan Israel instituted the Bat Mitzvah, it also hired its first female religious leader. In 1972 Barbara Ostfeld joined the temple as a part-time cantor and received an enthusiastic welcome. As one Sisterhood member proclaimed, "It was my pleasure to boast that Mishkan Israel does believe in women's liberation and that we have engaged a woman cantor." The women's liberation movement gave impetus, support, and a language for Mishkan Israel women to assert their demands more forcefully as members of the congregation. At the same time, the changes that took place at Mishkan Israel during the late sixties and seventies owed much to the broader acceptance of women's rights within the

synagogue community. After all, a female cantor could not have been hired without the votes of both male and female congregants.[15]

In 1983 synagogue leaders plainly asserted that "at Mishkan Israel we hold that men and women are equal."[16] Indeed, by the early 1980s, men and women enjoyed identical religious and political rights at Mishkan Israel. While subtle forms of gender bias remained, formal barriers to women's equality had been removed. The acceptance of women as full partners in the congregation represents one of the many changes that occurred during a century and a half of Jewish life at Mishkan Israel. Women's position in the synagogue was, in part, a reflection of the popular gender notions of each era. During periods of heightened feminist consciousness, the congregation made its boldest moves toward recognizing women's rights. Ultimately, the actions and attitudes of congregants determined the pace and extent of progress on women's issues. As successive generations of Mishkan Israel women gained experience and confidence, they became dissatisfied with a behind-the-scenes role in congregational life. The Sisterhood's persistent lobbying efforts pressured synagogue leaders to reform policies concerning women. The greatest strides were made when congregants, both male and female, began to recognize women as legitimate actors in religious life and synagogue government. Only when women's demands for inclusion met with a willingness to accept new gender norms did Mishkan Israel truly become a congregation of equals.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]Archival records for Ahavas Achos are located in the WhitneyLibrary, New Haven Colony Historical Society, New Haven,Connecticut. A copy of the Ahavas Achos constitution has been transcribed by Celia Lerner, "The Ahavas Achos Constitution," in *Jews in New Haven, Vol. 1*,ed.Jonathan Sarna (New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1978), pp. 17–20; see also Arthur Chiel, "Looking Back," *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 19, 26,October 1972.

[2]The efforts of Mishkan Israel women are recorded sporadically in congregational minutes. See minutes, 4 April 1897, 24 December 1899, 29 June 1900, Box 3, Folder A, Mishkan Israel Archives, MSS #B54, Whitney Library, New Haven Colony Historical Society, (hereafter, MIA); minutes, 6 July 1909, Box 3, Folder B,MIA. [Unless otherwise specified, all references to minutes indicate the regular Board of Trustees and Congregational meetings.]

[3]Minutes, 8 December 1904, Box 3, Folder A, MIA.

[4]Sisterhood minutes,4,10 November 1919, 8 April 1920, Box 48,Folder A,MIA. While the Sisterhood chose to focus its efforts upon Mishkan Israel affairs, it also defined the temple's responsibilities quite broadly. The Sisterhood still participated in a wide range of communal activities, but did so explicitly as a representative of the congregation.

For more on the creation of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York and Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.285–86.

[5]Sisterhood Annual Report,1930,pp.10–11,Box 43,Folder A;Sisterhood minutes, 30 March 1917, 11 April 1917, 4 October 1917,Box 48, Folder A, MIA.

[6]Sisterhood minutes,10 December 1922,Box 48,Folder B; minutes 5 June 1922, 2 October 1922, 28 December 1922,Box 4, Folder A,MIA. It is not surprising that the Sisterhood and National Council of Jewish Women issued a joint resolution to the Mishkan Israel Board of Trustees since the two organizations shared many of the same members.

[7]Minutes, 11 December 1924, 18 December 1924, Box 4, Folder A;minutes 2 December 1913, 14 December 1913, Box 3, Folder B; minutes, 4 April 1927, 9 September 1929, 3 October 1929, Box 4,Folder B; Sisterhood minutes 10 December 1922, Box 48, Folder B.

[8]Abba Hillel Silver, cited in Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.306. As Michael Meyer explains, "Not only did women predominate at services, but nationally Sisterhoods outnumbered Brotherhoods in chapters and individual membership by more than three to one." ibid; *Mishkan Israel Bulletin*, 26 January 1922, Box 17,Folder A; Sisterhood minutes, 5, 9 March 1942, 6 February 1941,Box 48, Folder E, MIA.

[9]Jonathan Sarna has observed that changes at Mishkan Israel came in peak periods of revolution followed by periods of stability. I have found his analysis to be accurate in characterizing the pace of change at Mishkan Israel in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jonathan Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Temple Mishkan Israel, " in *Jews In New Haven, Vol. 3*, eds. Barry Herman and Werner S. Hirsch (New Haven Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1981), pp. 100–106.

For examples of the Sisterhood's repeated attempts to gain a position on the Board, see minutes, 4 April 1927, Box 4, FolderA; minutes, 27 November 1939, 29 April 1940, 4 November 1940, Box 5, Folder B; minutes, 8 January 1948, Box 6, Folder B,MIA.

[10]Minutes, 11 December 1950, 16 April 1951, 13 May 1951, Box 6,Folder B; for changes in the structure of the Board of Trustees and the admission of Sisterhood and Brotherhood presidents,see minutes, 3 February 1958, Box 7, Folder B, MIA.

[11]Minutes, 11 April 1972, p.6, Box 8, Folder C, MIA.

[12]Sisterhood report, 12 December 1971, Box 8, Folder C; Mishkan Israel Bulletin, 23 April 1976, Box 21, Folder C, MIA.

[13]For more on Reform movements' attitude toward women, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 139–40, 242,379–80; Sarna,"Innovation and Consolidation," pp. 101–102.

[14]Minutes, 12 June 1967, 8 May 1967, Box 8, Folder A; minutes, 6 November 1972, p.2; 11 December 1971, p.2; 11 June 1973, p.2, Box8, Folder C, MIA.

[15]*Mishkan Israel Bulletin*, 7 January 1972, Box 21, Folder A;Sisterhood Report, 12 December 1971, Box 8, Folder C, MIA.

[16]"Cantor's Voice, " *Mishkan Israel Bulletin*, March 1983, Box 22,Folder C, MIA.

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The Bima *of Congregation B'nai Jacob on George Street. Erected in 1912, this photograph was taken shortly before the building was demolished for redevelopment in the early 1960s.* (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

B'nai Jacob in the Interwar Period:
An Immigrant Synagogue's Move Toward Conservative Judaism

by Adam Shear

THE EMERGENCE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM as a separate movement from Orthodoxy and Reform has now been examined by many scholars, but still remains somewhat mysterious. Although many have traced the history of the movement through major institutions like the Jewish Theological Seminary or the United Synagogue, few have looked at the emergence of the Conservative synagogue as an identifiable institution.[1] Synagogue histories themselves tend to merely "chronicle key events and express a filiopietistic pride in the achievements of great founders and builders of congregations."[2] Thus, very little has been done to examine the religious attitudes of congregants themselves. It is impossible, of course, to get inside the minds of individual congregants. It is possible, however, to get some sense (although incomplete) of what was going on from the minutes of the congregation and from the recollections of some members. A look at one synagogue in the inter-war period, New Haven's B'nai Jacob, reveals that its emergence as a Conservative synagogue must be seen as a gradual, often unconscious, process. This process of "Conservatization" at B'nai Jacob exemplifies, in many ways, the national trend of the time.

B'nai Jacob, now located in the suburb of Woodbridge, is one of the largest and most established Conservative synagogues in the country. B'nai Jacob, also known as the "Russian Shul" for many

years, was incorporated in 1882 by immigrants fleeing the pogroms of 1881–82 in Russia. Prior to this time, there had been two synagogues in New Haven, both serving the predominantly German community: the Reform Mishkan Israel, founded in 1840, and the Orthodox B'nai Scholom founded in the 1850's. As was typical of the time, however, the arriving Eastern European immigrants did not feel comfortable in German Orthodox synagogues. When B'nai Jacob was founded, the original by-laws required that "worship [be] according to the Polish-Jewish ritual.[3] The congregation grew steadily as more Eastern European immigrants arrived in the city, and acquired a building in 1885.

Writing in 1947, Charles Resnikoff assigns a specific date to B'nai Jacob's affiliation with Conservative Judaism, "B'nai Jacob...became 'Conservative' instead of Orthodox in 1923."[4] Resnikoff, who grew up in New Haven in the 1920's, may have had some significant event in mind. Based on my examination of the records of the synagogue, however, 1923 appears to be a completely arbitrary date. None of the traditional markers of affiliation with Conservative Judaism took place in that year. In fact, 1923 appears to be a year in which many members questioned the trend toward Conservatism (although they would not have been able to label it as such) and took action to slow it.

What were the traditional markers of affiliation with the nascent Conservative movement? A better formulation of the question, for the sake of clarity, might be what do historians traditionally take to be the (unconscious) markers of affiliation? The first is membership in the United Synagogue, founded in 1913. Its original name was the "United Synagogue of America, a Union for Promoting Traditional Judaism." A debated had ensued over whether to put "Conservative" in the name of the organization, but the proposal to do so failed.[5] When B'nai Jacob joined the United Synagogue in 1921, some members may have been aware of this debate, but most undoubtedly were not. In any case, affiliation with the United Synagogue in this period was not necessarily an indication of a move away from Orthodoxy. According to Jeffrey Gurock, some of the original members of the United Synagogue "had maintained strict orthodox ritual and seating patterns."[6] Charles Kroloff, on the other

hand, sees a move toward Conservatism in the decision to join the United Synagogue since B'nai Jacob had previously been a member of the Union of Orthodox Congregations.[7]

Another marker toward Conservatism is the background of the rabbis hired by the congregation. The first full-time permanent rabbi engaged by B'nai Jacob was Abraham Burstein, hired in February 1920.[8] Not only was Rabbi Burstein the first permanent rabbi of B'nai Jacob, but the "first English-speaking orthodox Rabbi in New England."[9] Burstein was born in Cleveland in 1893, and ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in 1917.[10] According to Kroloff, "[Rabbi Burstein] was obtained at the insistence of the younger, less traditional element of the Congregation."[11] There does seem to be some basis for Kroloff's statement. At a 1912 meeting, Charles Smirnow, one of those involved in the hiring, spoke in favor of mixed seating.[12]

One historian of the Conservative movement, Jack Wertheimer, has stressed the importance of Seminary-trained Rabbis in introducing changes into the orthodox synagogues to which they were appointed.[13] In the case of B'nai Jacob, Pamela Nadell has written that Burstein "introduced Conservatism" to B'nai Jacob.[14] Aside from his establishment of a Sunday school for children and adult education classes, however, Burstein appears to have done very little to "introduce Conservatism" at B'nai Jacob during his one year tenure. The process toward mixed seating had already begun, Friday night services were established by his successor, and a mixed choir was not yet contemplated. Perhaps, of course, Burstein would have made more changes had he been rehired at the conclusion of this contract. Instead he was let go, reflecting a 22–2 vote "to have a rabbi who used both English and Jewish [Yiddish], instead of English alone."[15] Abraham Karp has discussed the role of the often-found requirement that congregational business be conducted in Yiddish in alienating the second-generation from Orthodoxy.[16] Here we seem to have a case of the first generation demanding that the use of Yiddish be reinstated, or at least, that a Rabbi competent in both languages be found. Indeed, this decision of the congregation should be seen as a compromise, Although the congregation did hire bilingual rabbis after that point, all future rabbis of B'nai Jacob were

also graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary.[17] Thus, while it may be unreasonable to say that Rabbi Burstein "introduced Conservatism," it may be said that Rabbi Burstein's appointment was an indication that Conservatism was being introduced.

Following his removal, however, the minutes of the Board indicate that "Brother H. Goldman was empowered to use his own discretion when it comes to inviting Orthodox Rabbis [to apply for the position]."[18] When Rabbi Reuben Rubins arrived in the fall of 1921, he introduced late Friday night services in November,[19] another 'marker' of the trend toward Conservatism. Kroloff, in fact, calls such services, " sharp break from traditional Judaism."[20] Certainly, late Friday night services were anathema to the most traditional Orthodox rabbis of the period. At the same time, they were not uncommon, even among orthodox synagogues. As late as the 1950s, Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol, an Orthodox synagogue near B'nai Jacob, advertised "inspirational, informative and dignified services," beginning at 8:15 on Friday evenings.[21] Friday night services were introduced by Rabbi Rubins, but the membership seems to have approved: "...Harris Botwinick expressed himself as being quite pleased with the first Friday night service and felt confident that this was what our people wanted."[22] One year later, the services still proved popular, with the "Y" newsletter reporting that "the Auditorium continues to be crowded to the doors."[23] Rabbi Rubins died in early 1922, but Friday night services seem to have been permanently established.

Perhaps the most revealing marker of Conservatism, or at least the most visible, is mixed seating. Today, it would be difficult to find a Conservative synagogue without mixed seating, or at least, "compromise seating," as Jonathan Sarna terms it.[24] At the same time, almost all (if not all) orthodox synagogues today maintain some separation of men and women. By the 1920s, synagogues considered "Conservative" tended to have mixed or compromise seating.[25] B'nai Jacob had introduced limited mixed seating in 1917,[26] but as Harvey Ladin, a long-time member of B'nai Jacob, explained:

> It took about ten years to accomplish this, but by 1924 all women who wished to do so were permitted to sit on the main floor. Many

> chose to remain in the balcony, but most of the young women sat with their husbands from this time on.[27]

The trend toward the more liberal practice seems to have been a gradual one. In 1922, for instance, a motion was made for the congregation's secretary to "be instructed to write each member [to ask] whether or not he desires to seat [sic] with his wife or lady [!] downstairs and how many extra seats he wishes reserved for him."[28] At least in 1922, the option remained for men to sit by themselves in their downstairs' pew. They would, however, have been surrounded by other men and their wives. Likewise, women seem to have retained the option of not sitting with their husbands for a long time after mixed seating was permitted.

What was the impetus for this process of liberalization? The "catalyst for change" in the synagogues of Eastern European immigrants in this period was often a move to a new synagogue building, as Wertheimer has pointed out.[29] Indeed, a discussion that took place at a 1912 B'nai Jacob building committee meeting, mentioned above, seems to bear out Wertheimer's contention. The minutes for that meeting record the discussion in unusual detail:

> A long discussion then took place as to whether seats should be arranged for men and women together or separate as originally intended....
> Bro[ther] Stock shows us an example of [a] modern synagogue[,] the Moses Montefiore Schule of N.Y. They get along as well as the most strict Orthodox schule.
> Mr. Reback (Con) said that we must not pay to[o] much attention to the desire of the future generation. We must look first to make ourselves more comfortable.
> Bro. Wagner (Pro) reminds the Com. that the Ladies auxiliary are in favor of Co-ed and will petition for same. They will not consider any compromise....
> Bro. Rosenberg spoke on this subject at length and showed himself to be very much in opposition. Bro. Stock suggests that the seats be arranged double. Each member to receive his original no. and an empty seat next to him. These empty seats are to be sold on holi-



View toward the rear of the B'nai Jacob sanctuary showing the women's gallery and the organ pipes (c. 1960) (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)



Rabbi Leon Spitz (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, PHOTO REPRODUCTION BY CARL NEWLIN)

> days and in case the members ever decided to have otherwise could be utilized for use of wives and families of members. No motion. Chairman Smirnow suggests that [the] question be tabled until after the holidays and then to be reconsidered.[30]

There appears to be some recognition, even on the part of those who favored mixed seating, that a change could imply that the synagogue would no longer be "strict Orthodox." Harvey Ladin has suggested that one reason for B'nai Scholom's unpopularity among Eastern European immigrants was its practice of mixed seating as early as the 1880s.[31] Also suggested here is a sense of generational conflict. There is also the indication that the women of the congregation were demanding the change. Ladin suggested that one reason mixed seating finally did come about was in recognition of the work that the B'nai Jacob Ladies' Aid Society did in raising money for the new building.[32] Bane Stock's suggestion of providing extra seats in case the congregation did decide to adopt mixed seating was compatible with the plans as drawn up in 1911 which provided for 400 downstairs and 250 gallery seats.[33] Wertheimer notes that very few adult men, compared to adult women, attended Conservative services in the late 1920s.[34] There is no reason to think that the relative composition of a congregation would have been different in the late 1910s. If so, a crowded women's gallery and a nearly empty men's section would have been a further impetus toward permitting mixed seating in 1917.

Can the move toward complete mixed seating by 1924 be taken as a conscious affiliation with Conservatism? It seems that the answer is no. Although aware that mixed seating was not "strict[ly] Orthodox," it may well have been seen as Orthodox enough. Jeffrey Gurock points out that many synagogues permitted mixed seating and were also members of the Orthodox Union in the 1920s.[35] The members of B'nai Jacob, at the time, however, did realize that mixed seating represented a significant break with the past.

Indeed, there is some evidence that members of B'nai Jacob continued to think of themselves as "Orthodox" even after "Conservatizing" changes were made. As we have seen, Rabbi Rubins applied for the position of rabbi at B'nai Jacob in a search being

made for "Orthodox Rabbis." Indeed, a few months before Rabbi Rubins was hired, the secretary of the congregation reported to the members, "[We have} considered merging with the Olive Street Synagogue [B'nai Scholom], but rejected this because we are strictly orthodox, and we do not want to bring in any reforms."[36] The general New Haven community also saw B'nai Jacob as "orthodox." In May 1921, the "Y" newsletter described the New Haven Jewish community: "along religious lines there are seven good-sized orthodox synagogues and one large reformed Jewish temple."[37]

Following the death of Rabbi Rubins, there was a change in instructions to the president of the synagogue regarding the search for a successor. The minutes of the March 3, 1922 board meeting indicate:

> It was moved and seconded that [the] Pres[ident] be given the authority to keep in touch with the United Synagogue or other sources with [the] object of selecting [a] Rabbi for our synagogue. Carried.[38]

The board could not, at that point, ask for a "Conservative" rabbi. In fact, we must assume that the members of the synagogue were still seeking an "Orthodox" rabbi. It should also be noted, of course, that the President was also authorized to consult with "other sources." It is significant that the power to search for the new rabbi was transferred from Goldman, who we will see was more traditional, to President Stock, who was more liberal. In general, this decision should be seen as part of a clear trend of greater involvement with the institutions of the nascent Conservative movement.

Delegates from B'nai Jacob began to attend United Synagogue conventions in 1921. In 1923, the President of the congregation, Bane Stock, reported on the annual convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association. He made no attempt to hide what he thought was the most important aspect of that convention:

> ...[he] was very much impressed with the spirit and the *liberality of the delegates*. He wished every member of the congregation could have been present there.[39]

The hiring of the next Rabbi can also be seen as part of this trend. Leon Spitz, hired in late 1922, was also a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He had received a secular education at Trinity College in Hartford and Columbia University. Before coming to B'nai Jacob, he had been religious director of the Cleveland Jewish Center.[40] His association with the Jewish Center movement places him in circles that would have included Mordecai Kaplan and other important voices in the emerging Conservative movement. At the same time, however, Spitz seems to have considered himself an Orthodox rabbi. Soon after he arrived at B'nai Jacob, he also sought to reassure anxious members on that account:

> Rabbi Spitz addressed the members and explained the work accomplished to date and assured the members that whatever is being done is according to real Jewish orthodox fashion and we need not fear any criticism.[41]

Kroloff, writing in the 1950s, considered Spitz an "Orthodox" rabbi.[42]

Despite the growing affiliation with the institutions of Conservatism, change came rather slowly, if at all, during the Spitz years, which lasted until 1926. Spitz continued the Friday night service, as we have seen. Changes in practice, however, did not occur. In September of 1923, the board approved a motion to allow women to sing in the choir at Friday night services. And, at the same general meeting at which President Stock reported on the "liberality" of the JTS convention, the congregants ratified that decision by a vote of 28–24. Thirty-eight members, however, signed a letter protesting the decision. A special meeting was held on October 22, at which:

> Motion was made by Judge Caplan and seconded by Frank Teitelman that the action of the Congregation in voting for a mixed choir be reconsidered. Carried.

> Motion was made by Bro. Caplan and seconded [by] Bro. Silverman that the matter of a mixed choir be dropped. Carried.[43]

Clearly, the "orthodox" forces were still able to muster enough votes to prevent a major change. In fact, it was not until 1930 that the congregation would, finally, "unanimously" vote for a mixed choir all year round.[44] Other changes, such as the use of an organ, came later in the 1930s.

Although no real changes were made in 1923, controversy abounded. At a meeting in November, J. Prober, a member of the Board was suspended "for insulting our Rabbi at the services of November 2, 1923."[45] The details of the incident are not given, but the Board's action reveals a strong level of support for Rabbi Spitz. Following the decision to suspend Prober, a "discussion concerning conditions threatening to undermine the Congregation followed."[46] Again, no details are given. Since this meeting follows so closely on the abortive and highly-controversial effort to include women in the choir, we can speculate that the Board was concerned with the level of divisiveness in the congregation. Despite their insistence on considering themselves "orthodox," the congregants of B'nai Jacob were, slowly but surely, being brought within the orbit of the Conservative movement. After Rabbi Spitz left the Congregation in 1926 to take a pulpit in Bridgeport, Rabbi Samuel Cohen, Executive Director of United Synagogue, was hired to lead High Holiday Services in 1927. In 1928, when discussion began about building a new synagogue (B'nai Jacob grew rapidly in the 1920s), Cohen was brought back as a consultant on finding funding.[47] Two months afterwards, in March, delegates were sent to observe the physical plant of the Jewish Centers of Newark and Brooklyn.[48] Throughout the 1920s the synagogue was involved in raising funds in New Haven for the United Synagogue and JTS.[49] William Horowitz, who began teaching in the Sunday School of B'nai Jacob in 1926 while an undergraduate at Yale, recalls that by the late 1920s many congregants were beginning to see themselves as Conservative rather than Orthodox.[50]

In November 1928, Rabbi Louis Greenberg was hired. Born in Russia in 1893, Greenberg was ordained at the Seminary in

1926.[51] Greenberg immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty. Thus he would have been bilingual in Yiddish and English, appealing to both the older and the younger members of the synagogue. It was during his tenure, which lasted until his death in 1946, that numerous ritual changes were introduced. In March 1930, the mixed choir was authorized to sing at Passover services. At the same meeting it was suggested that members be asked what "their sentiments are concerning having the mixed choir sing on Rosh Hashono and Yom Kipur".[52] In May following Passover, the board voted unanimously to hire the mixed choir to perform all year round.[53] It appears that the forces for liberalization had won out by this time.

Although unable to have the decision rescinded as in 1923, the more traditional members registered their disapproval by withdrawing from the main service. In July of 1930 the Board allowed the Congregation's Gabbai, Harris Goldman, "to use the new Director's room for a minion for the High Holidays."[54] Even this solution appears not to have satisfied Goldman, who soon left the synagogue and "took office in another shull."[55] No mention was made of other members resigning at this time. It seems, therefore, that Goldman may have been unable to assemble nine other men willing to form the breakaway minyan. The following year, the board approved a proposal for the playing of the organ at Friday night services.[56] By 1933, the organ was permitted to be played on the three "pilgrimage" festivals.[57] The use of the organ on the High Holidays, however, did not pass until 1937.[58]

Another marker of Conservatism appears to have been the turning of the torah reader to face the congregation. In traditional practice, the Torah reader faces forward, with his back to the congregants. In 1928, there was discussion concerning the turning around of "the table on the altar," but no decisions were made and the matter seems to have been dropped.[59] By 1933 or '34 the Board had decided to turn the Torah reader around to face the congregation.

It appears from the records of B'nai Jacob that the impetus for most of the ritual changes throughout the 1920s and '30s came from the laity. This seems to be in keeping with Marshall Sklare's description:

> Historically, Conservatism has been a movement led by *laymen* rather than by rabbis. In many of the synagogues built in the area of third settlement, major changes were instituted by the laity themselves. This was done either with the consent of the rabbis, or as frequently happened since many of these congregations were new institutions, functionaries were engaged *after* the new innovations had been conceived of, if not implemented.[60]

B'nai Jacob imperfectly fits Sklare's model since it was neither a new institution in the 1920s nor located in the third area of settlement, but it does seem to conform in terms of laity-introduced reforms. The mixed choir had already been introduced, to a limited extent, before Rabbi Greenberg's arrival. The turning around of the Torah reader and the use of the organ had already been discussed. Presumably, Greenberg was solicited for his views on some of these issues before he was hired. At the least, it would seem that he would not have been hired if he had expressed interest in ending Friday night services or discontinuing the mixed choir.

Attendance at Sabbath and daily morning services was very low during this period. William Horowitz estimates that less than ten percent of the members would attend on any given Saturday.[61] Beginning in 1930 the board made constant appeals for attendance.[62] This cannot be seen as "typical" of Conservatism, however, as attendance figures for all nominally Orthodox synagogues remained low throughout this period, as described by *Community News*.

> We listen and think of the half dozen orthodox synagogues of New Haven. A thin congregation the Sabbath. Crowded to the doors once or twice a year.[63]

This contemporary description may help explain the reason behind the greater level of debate over ritual changes at High Holiday services. The use of the mixed choir or the organ was not as controversial throughout the year as was the introduction of these reforms at High Holiday services. It seems that the bulk of the congregation which attended only three days a year were more insistent on a traditional service than the smaller number who

attended every week. In other words, the more observant seem to have been more "Conservative," while the less observant seem to have been more "Orthodox." While such a thesis would sound shocking to many Orthodox Jews today, it makes sense in the context of the 1920s. Those who were more traditional and fairly observant would have left B'nai Jacob altogether. Those who remained active were able to implement changes they viewed as positive for the services they attended regularly. The vast majority of members, however, appear to have cared only that the one or two services a year that they attended were carried out in a more traditional manner. They did not leave the synagogue until even that service became "threatened." Another factor, of course, may well have been that the High Holiday services were considered "more important" even by active congregants who did attend the rest of the year.[64] This seems to have been the case with Harris Goldman, for instance.

B'nai Jacob did not change its constitution's purpose clause to reflect an adherence to "Conservative Judaism" until 1948.[65] By the mid-1930s however, the members clearly thought of themselves as conservative Jews, at least with a lower-case "c." Writing in 1936, Rabbi Greenberg was able to say that B'nai Jacob represented "the ideology of conservative Judaism."[66] During the inter-war period, there was a clear trend toward Conservatism at work in the activities of the synagogue. This trend, however, was a gradual one, and is only really clear in hindsight. For many years, members of B'nai Jacob saw themselves as "Orthodox" Jews even as they were making changes and joining institutions that would one day mark them out as "Conservative." That the move toward Conservative Judaism was largely unconscious may seem trivial or self-evident. It is an important point, however, to keep in mind when examining the history of the Conservative movement. Most of the work done on this phenomenon has dealt with national institutions or with intellectual history—what Charles Liebman would call "elite religion."[67] A look from the "bottom up" at "folk religion," however, is always necessary for a complete picture.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]A notable exception is Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," in Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 111-152.
[2]Wertheimer, preface, p. vii.
[3]cited in *B'nai Jacob, One Hundred Years.*
[4]"New Haven: The Jewish Community," *Commentary* 4, November 1947, p.472.
[5]See Pamela Nadell, *Conservative Judaism in America, A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, Westport, CT., 1988, p.326.
[6]Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue" in Wertheimer, p.60.
[7]Kroloff, "A History of Congregation B'nai Jacob, New Haven, Connecticut," an unpublished research paper, Yale University, 1953. Kroloff does not indicate, however, when B'nai Jacob left the Orthodox Union, and I was unable to find any reference to membership in the records of the congregation. If the disaffiliation with the Orthodox Union took place immediately before affiliation with the United Synagogue, his sense that joining the United Synagogue was a rejection of at least one form of Orthodoxy seems correct. If, on the other hand, B'nai Jacob had allowed membership in the Orthodox Union to lapse many years before, it is harder to make a conclusion of that sort.
[8]"Report to the members of the Congregation by the Secretary,Abraham Brown," April 10, 1921. All records and minutes of B'nai Jacob cited can be found in the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven.
[9]*New Haven Journal-Courier*, Monday, April 19,1920. The *Journal–Courier* of April 17 reports that a representative of both the United Synagogue and the Orthodox Union spoke at Burstein's installation.
[10]Nadell, pp. 46-47.
[11]Kroloff, p.18.
[12]Minutes of the "Committee on the New Synagogue," May 12, 1912.
[13]Wertheimer, p. 117.
[14]Nadell, p.46.
[15]"Report to the Members of the Congregation..."
[16]Karp, "Overview: the Synagogue in America—A Historical Typology," in Wertheimer, pp. 18-19.
[17]I have not been able to ascertain for certain whether Burstein's successor, Rabbi Rubins, was ordained at JTS. I assume so, however, since he was recommended for the post by the United Synagogue.
[18]Minutes of the B'nai Jacob Board, May 19, 1921.
[19]Ladin, ed., *The George Street Synagogue of Congregation B'nai Jacob*, New Haven, 1961, p.3.

[20]Kroloff, p.20.
[21]See the *Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol Bulletin*, February 1952.
[22] Minutes of B'nai Jacob, November 17, 1921.
[23]*Community News*, November 1922, p.12.
[24]Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in Wertheimer, p.380. "Compromise seating" allows mixed seating in some areas of the synagogue and maintains separate seating areas as well.
[25]Ibid.
[26]Kroloff, p.19.
[27]Ladin, ed., *The George Street Synagogue*, p.3.
[28]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, June 15, 1922.
[29]Wertheimer, p.114.
[30]Minutes of the "Committee on the New Synagogue," May 12, 1912.
[31]Ladin, comments at the one hundredth anniversary celebration of Bikur Cholim Shevath Achim, March 25, 1984, NHJHS Tape 118, transcript, p.10.
[32]Ladin, *The George Street Synagogue*, p.3.
[33]Minutes of the "Committee on the New Synagogue," December 3, 1911.
[34]Wertheimer, p.120.
[35]Gurock, in Wertheimer, pp. 62-63.
[36]"Report to the Members of the Congregation..."
[37]*Community News*, May 1921.
[38]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, March 3, 1922.
[39]Ibid., October 9, 1923. (emphasis mine)
[40]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, November 19, 1922.
[41]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, November 19,1922.
[42]Kroloff, p.22 and footnote 61, p.22.
[43]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, October 22, 1923. See also Kroloff's description of the affair, p.20.
[44]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, May 20, 1930. According to Nadell, B'nai Jacob, by 1928, "had already instituted mixed seating, late Friday night services, and a mixed choir." (p.119) The minutes from June 1925 to August 1927 are missing. I would guess that the introduction of the mixed choir, on a limited basis, took place during that period, perhaps after Rabbi Spitz left in 1926. (It is also possible that Rabbi Spitz left in protest at the adoption of a mixed choir.)
[45]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, November 7, 1923.
[46]Ibid.
[47]Ibid., January 25, 1928
[48]Ibid., March 8, 1928.
[49]See for example the minutes during the fall of 1928 and the winter of 1929 for discussion of the United Synagogue fund raising drive.

[50]Interview with William Horowitz, December 5, 1991. Horowitz served as principal after Rabbi Spitz left, and was later a President of the congregation.
[51]Nadell, pp. 118-119.
[52]Minutes of B'nai Jacob, March 11, 1930.
[53]Ibid., May 20, 1930.
[54]Ibid., July 10, 1930.
[55]Ibid., September 10, 1930.
[56]Ibid., October 17, 1931.
[57]Ibid., March 16, 1933.
[58]Ibid., March 17, 1937.
[59]Ibid., November 4, 1928.
[60]Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, Glencoe, IL, 1955, p.114. (emphasis in original)
[61]Interview, December 5, 1991.
[62]See, for example, the minutes of October 16, 1930 and November 27, 1933.
[63]*Community News*, September 1922, p.10. See also Gurock's article in Wertheimer for the national situation.
[64]See Gurock, "The Winnowing of American Orthodoxy," in Marc Lee Raphael, ed., *Approaches to Modern Judaism*, Volume 2, Providence, 1983, p.45.
[65]See the "Constitution for Congregation B'nai Jacob," November 21, 1948. This was still 14 years before the Rabbinical Assembly, which did not declare its purpose the promotion of "Conservative Judaism" until 1962. (Nadell, p.301.)
[66]*B'nai Jacob Souvenir Diary*, 54th Annual Ball, December 5, 1936, p.3
[67]See Liebman, "The Religion of American Jews," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Rabbi and the Synagogue*, Volume 1 of Understanding American Judaism, New York, 1975, pp. 28–29.



Congregation B'nai Jacob on George Street. Erected in 1912, this photograph was taken by J. Herbert Kaye shortly before the building was demolished for redevelopment in the early 1960s. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

SIX GENERATIONS OF STROUSES IN NEW HAVEN RETAILING

by Charles Grannick, Jr.

MY GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER, Benjamin Strouse (1796-1877) was born in Elstadt, Germany. He was one of the early Jewish settlers in New Haven, coming here in the 1840s. He married Deborah Weil (1798-1881) in 1822 and they had six daughters and one son, Isaac, who founded the first corset factory in New Haven, on Union Street. Two years later, Max Adler became associated with Isaac Strouse and joined him in founding the Strouse, Adler Corset Company, which is still in existence.

In an obituary notice on July 23, 1877 the New Haven newspaper stated

> Mr. Benjamin Strouse was the paternal head of an extensive and highly respected family, numbering not less than 100 persons, nearly all of them residing in our city; a family than whom there is no larger one among the Germans in the state.

Benjamin's daughter Rachel (1826–1904) married Lewis H. Freedman (1826–1909) in 1850. Mr. Freedman was born in Bavaria

on May 21, 1826. He left home as a boy, spent several years in England, and then came to the United States, first settling in Boston and a few years later, in New Haven.

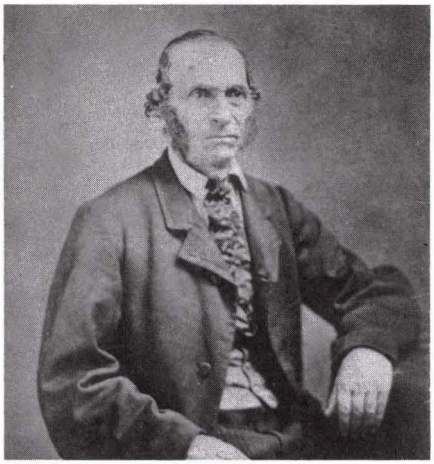
Lewis Freedman immediately became an important factor of the business life in the city, engaging in the clothing business with great success. He started his business on State Street and then moved to Crown when his business outgrew its quarters. For many years his store was one of the most prominent in New Haven—Mr. Freedman being a pioneer in the ready-made clothing trade. During the Civil War his establishment outfitted numerous military companies with uniforms. He later opened a merchant tailoring establishment on Church Street, which also proved most successful.

In 1866 Mr. Freedman retired from the clothing business and devoted his energies to real estate and to the growth of New Haven. At the time of his death, he was a large property holder in the city. He was a member of the old Mercantile club, which later became the Quinnipiac Club, and was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce during his long association with that organization.

The Freedmans had four daughters and two sons. The eldest daughter, Anna (1852–1953) married Milius Frank (1846–1922). Mr. Frank had migrated from Bavaria and started in the clothing business by calling on customers with a pack on his back. He then opened a retail store and later, with his father-in-law, established the dry goods establishment of Freedman and Frank. When that partnership dissolved the business was continued by Milius Frank; it was located on Chapel Street, between State and Orange Streets.

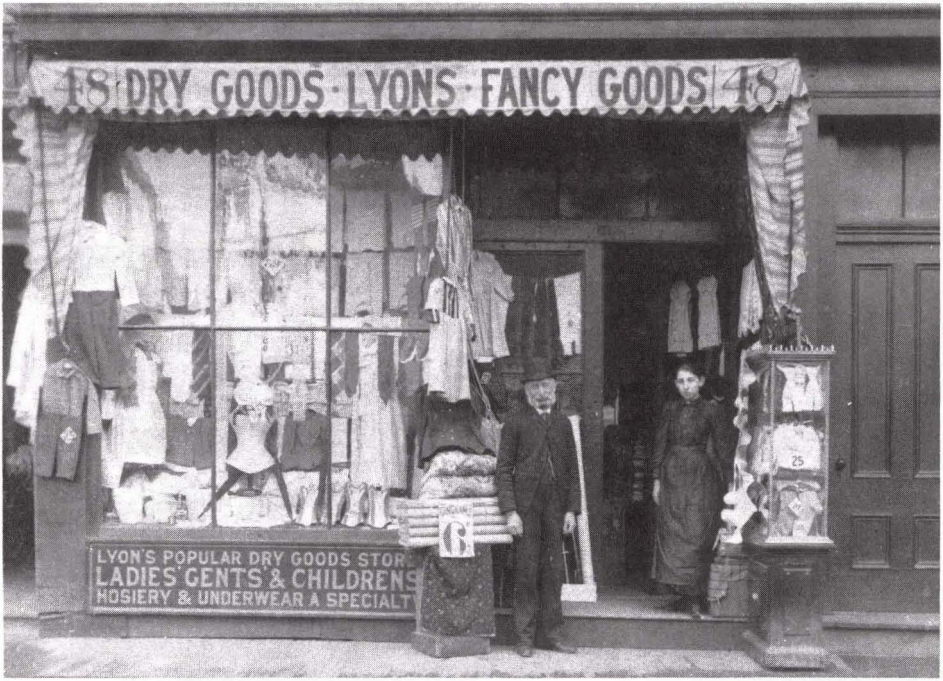
Mr. Frank purchased the Globe Theater Building on Chapel Street near Church and retained his ownership of this building for many years, even after he left New Haven with his family and settled in New York City. He eventually sold the Globe Building to Moses Slepack, a New Haven native, who had also moved to New York city where he became a very successful stock broker.

Isidor Freedman (1862–1933) was born on February 28, 1862, and was the youngest of the six children of Lewis and Rachel Strouse Freedman. After attending Webster Grammar School and Hillhouse High School, he then became a clerk in his father's store where he remained from 1879 until 1886. He then established his





Benjamin Strouse and his wife, Deborah Weil, in the mid-nineteenth century. (COURTESY OF CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)



Levi Lyons standing in the doorway of his fancy goods store at 48 Congress Ave. in the early 1890s, the girl is unidentified. (COURTESY OF CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)



Lewis H. Freedman, his wife, Rachel Strouse, and their granddaughter, Ruth Freedman, photographed in their backyard on William Street in the 1890s. (COURTESY OF CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)



Solomon Gompertz and his wife Bertha Lyons with their children, S. Michael and Elizabeth, c. 1920. (COURTESY OF CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)

own store and, after a brief period, formed a partnership with Adolph Mendel, and with two clerks, carried on the business of Mendel & Freedman. They became one of the largest department stores in the state, with two hundred and fifty employees. The store was destroyed by a huge fire in 1910 and Mr. Freedman retired from the retail business. He continued to manage his investments until his death in 1933.

Isidor Freedman married Sarah K. Kahn (1872–1942) of New York City on January 5, 1895. Their daughter, Ruth F., was graduated from Johnstone's School and Miss Boardman's Boarding School for Girls. She married Edwin Hays of New York city; the couple had one son, Daniel, a New York attorney.

Isidor Freedman's partner, Adolph Mendel, was born in Bruckhausen, Germany on September 7, 1854, the son of Aaron Mendel and Esther Abraham. During Adolph's childhood, the family moved to Bremen where they were engaged in the dry goods business until the father died at the age of 59. Adolph was reared and educated in Bremen and became engaged in the book and stationary business before he attained his legal majority. He continued in this business until 1871 when he came to America where he felt there should be more opportunity for individual effort. Shortly after his arrival in this country he came to New Haven.

In New Haven he became a clerk for the dry goods establishment of Freedman and Frank. After that partnership dissolved and the business was continued by Milius Frank, Adolph stayed there for fifteen years. By that time he had risen to the position of superintendent and the store had become one of the largest in New Haven. When Mr. Frank retired, Mendel associated with Isidor Freedman and, together, they established the firm of Mendel & Freedman.

After the Mendel & Freedman fire, Mr. Mendel formed a partnership with a Mr. Harris and their firm of Mendel & Harris occupied the large, rebuilt building on Chapel Street. However competition from the Shartenberg Department Store, which was located directly across the street (under the management of Henry Shartenberg, whose family also had a large, well established business in Providence, RI), and the flourishing businesses of Malley's and the Gamble-Desmond Department Stores, located farther up on Chapel

Street by the New Haven Green, were too much competition for Mendel & Harris, which closed. It was later replaced by Stanley Dry Goods, which occupied the building for many years.

Adolph Mendel was married on June 14, 1894 to Gussie Shenfeld, the daughter of J.B. Shenfeld, a prominent clothing merchant of Brooklyn, NY. The Mendels had one daughter, Esther Lissette, who married Max Glazer, the owner of a department store in the Naugatuck valley. The Glazers later moved to Washington, DC, where Max ran a successful Men's Shop for many years. Following the death of his wife, Gussie, Mr. Mendel lived in New Haven with the Glazers on Livingston Street and later accompanied them on their move to Washington, where he died.

Levi Lyons (1842–1926) was born in Abenheim, Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, in 1842. He emigrated to the United States in his late teens and eventually came to New Haven where he and his brother, Ferdinand, established the Lyons Department Store, in a fine building which had been erected in 1871 by the American National Life and Trust Company. In the early 1880s the partnership was dissolved and Ferdinand Lyons left New Haven with his family and the Levi Lyons family moved to St. Paul, MN, where another brother needed assistance with his growing business there. Their Chapel Street store in New Haven was occupied for many years by the successful Gamble-Desmond Department Store. Incidentally, Ferdinand Lyons' son, Emanuel (1868–1960), became a writer and was the author of a book on retailing. Emanuel Lyons returned to New Haven at the age of ninety and died at the Jewish Home for the Aged on November 4, 1960.

In 1875 Levi Lyons married Rosa, daughter of Lewis H. and Rachel Strouse Freedman. they had four daughters, Bertha (1877-1959) who married Solomon M. Gompertz (1877–1968), a New Haven printer for many years; Estelle (1880–1956), who married Samuel Dryfus (1882–1967); Lillian Ada (1884–1981), who married Charles M. Grannick (1884–1972); and Florence (1886–1981), who married Morris Marqusee (1881–1939), an optometrist. The two older daughters were born in New Haven and the two younger ones were born in St. Paul.



Harold H. Hahn and his son, Harold H. Hahn, Jr., featured on the cover of Toys *magazine, October 1971.* (COURTESY OF CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)

In 1890 Levi Lyons and his family returned to New Haven and he reopened the Lyons Department Store at 48 Congress Avenue, just above Commerce Street. A few years later Mr. Lyons built a fine building at 94 and 96 Congress Avenue, near Hill Street and directly across from the junction of Oak and Temple. Here he was joined by two sons-in-law, Charles M. Grannick and Samuel Dryfus. When Mr. Lyons retired in 1925 the sons-in-law continued the business. Samuel Dryfus retired in 1932 and Charles Grannick closed the store and retired in 1938.

After World War II Charles Grannick, Jr. (b. 1917) joined the jewelry firm of Bernard Oppenheimer, then located at Orange and Center Streets. That business had been started in 1848 as S. Silverthau & Sons by Mr. Oppenheimer's uncle and cousins. Mr. Grannick purchased the business upon Mr. Oppenheimer's death in the mid-1960s, and continued the business.

On January 3, 1937 Adele Marqusee (1910–1975), the daughter of Florence Lyons and Morris Marqusee, was married to Harold H. Hahn (1899–1989), who had started wholesaling picture post cards and novelties some years before. He was most successful and expanded into toys. His son, Harold H. Hahn, Jr. (1938-1975) joined his father's business after completing college. When they sold the business to Stop & Shop, Inc. in 1970, it consisted of thirty-eight toy departments in the Bradley Stores and a large warehouse located in North Haven.

The three sons of Harold H. Hahn, Jr., Kenneth (b. 1969), William (b. 1969), and Andrew (b. 1972) could possibly represent the seventh generation of the Strouse family in the New Haven business community.

Please be aware that this article is only about the descendants of Lewis H. and Rachel Strouse Freedman; Mrs. Freedman being one of Benjamin and Deborah Weil Strouse's eight children. Let us hope that some of the other seven, Theresa (Mrs. David H.) Freedman, Adelaide, Harriet (Mrs. Lewis) Asher, Sarah (Mrs. Moses) Greenbaum, Charles, Janette (Mrs. Mayer) Kahn, and Isaac Strouse 2nd, can have their stories told by their descendants.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: CHARLES GRANNICK, JR. is a fifth-generation New Havener, the son of Lillian Lyons and Charles M. Grannick, both life-long residents of this city. He attended Worthington Hooker School, Hillhouse High School, Quinnipiac College, the University of Connecticut, and Riverside College. During World War II he served over three years in the Army Transportation Corps handling troop movements at Camp Anza, the staging area for the Los Angeles Port of Transportation. He owned the Bernard Oppenheimer jewelry store and was a diamond expert and designer.

He is active in area Boy Scouting in Troop #15 and the Quinnipiac Council as well as in amateur theater groups; Quinnipiac Valley Theater and the Temple Players. He is a past member of the United Fund Budget Committee, the New Haven Chapter Red Cross Disaster Committee and Motor Corps, and is a charter member of the Ridge Top Club of North Haven. Currently he is Arbitrator for the Connecticut Better Business Bureau, and serves on the Boards of the Jewish Historical Society, the New Haven Preservation Trust, the Yale Peabody Museum Associates, and the Yale University Art Gallery.





Samuel Dryfus (left), in 1963, and Charles M. Grannick, Sr., about 1920, proprietors of the Lyons Department Store from 1925 until 1938. (COURTESY CHARLES GRANNICK, JR.)



The original Columbia Printing Company shop at the corner of Commerce and Temple streets about 1912. Joseph Drabkin is standing in the entrance. (COURTESY OF LESTER DRABKIN)

Joseph Drabkin:
A Citizen of New Haven

by Lester Yale Drabkin

MY FATHER, JOSEPH DRABKIN, never spoke much about his early life in Russia. I assumed he had bitter recollections of life there under the czarist government and didn't want to be reminded of it. A bit more of his early years is gleaned from a tape-recorded interview with him conducted by Harvey Ladin in 1960 that reposes in the archives of the New Haven Jewish Historical Society.

He was born in 1884 in the City of Gomel, in Belarus, Russia, to Yale and Sophie Markle Drabkin. It must have been a busy household, with three brothers, Leon, Harry, and Louis, and a sister, Celia. His father conducted a wholesale food supply business selling flour, sugar, and other staples. His schooling was limited to studying Hebrew with a *melamed*, whose time was mostly occupied with trying to maintain discipline amongst the boys in his class.

His formal education ended when he was thirteen and it was time for him to find a job. In a conversation with his father, young Joseph (or Joe, as he was known for most of his life) was counseled on the possibilities in the job market.

> Tailors and shoemakers are not held in high esteem, nor are they well paid. However, printing is regarded as an art more than a craft, and is considered more prestigious, and the possibilities of earning higher income are better.

With this sage advice, young Joe went out into the job market in Gomel and found work in a printing plant, where he learned the art and intricacies of type composition, setting type in Russian and Yiddish. Apparently, he had an aptitude for the trade, and was soon performing additional duties.

The historic city of Gomel was large enough to support theater, and they often had musical comedies and drama, as well as ballet, dance groups, and in the winter, opera. It became one of Joe's duties to visit these theaters to pick up copy to be printed as circulars, poster and advertising literature, and then to deliver the finished product to the theaters. Thus, he was first exposed to the world of the theater, and from then on, it held a life-long fascination for him. When he was fifteen, in addition to working at the print shop during the day, he got a job working evenings in the box office at one of the summer playhouses. On his free nights he made the rounds of the other theaters, taking in all the performances of visiting troupes; he loved every medium of entertainment.

He continued this busy mode of life for four years, working at his chosen profession of printing, and absorbing every form of theatrical and cultural entertainment that Gomel could provide. But darkening clouds appeared, threatening the peace and tranquillity of life around him. In 1903, violent pogroms struck in Gomel and in nearby Kishinev. He resolved to leave the land of his birth and to make a new life for himself in America.

It must have been a most heart-rending experience for young Joe, at seventeen, to bid good-by to his mother and father, along with his brothers and sister. It was a long and lonely voyage. He recalled years later, that his mother had given him sixty dollars to help him on his journey to the new world. He traveled on a crowded steamship for thirty-five days and was seasick most of the voyage, as were the

other immigrants to the new world. En route the liner docked briefly at Liverpool, England, where he noticed that the people in the street were dressed differently from the Eastern Europeans packed in the confines of steerage. He visited a clothing store and invested some of his precious few dollars in a pair of English shoes with rounded toes instead of the pointed-toe shoes worn by the other immigrants. He also purchased a black derby similar to those worn by Englishmen.

He remembered with pleasure that when he arrived in New York early in 1904 people remarked that with his new clothes he looked like a "regular American, not like a greenhorn." From New York he immediately took a train for New Haven, where his cousin, Naftallah Markle, welcomed him into his cold–water apartment on Gildea Alley. Naftallah was a plumbing contractor, and his nine children were ambitious, with a strong will to succeed. Several of them went to Yale, and grew to serve New Haven well, leaving a beneficial impact upon the community.

Joe lived in a room by himself that had formerly been used to store onions, potatoes, and other vegetables. Despite the busy household, he often felt lonely away from his family in Russia. This was reflected in his letters home, and his mother wrote to him on several occasions urging him to come home, offering to send money for his steamship passage. However, he had made a firm commitment to himself not to return to Russia, no matter how lonely, until he had given himself a fair chance in America to succeed, setting a limit of five years.

His first priority was to find a job, and based on his prior experience in Gomel, he sought work as a printer. There was one printing firm in town, the A.D. Steinbach Co., that did a considerable amount of business with various Jewish organizations. Joe secured employment there as a compositor, setting type in Yiddish. He enjoyed his work and advanced rapidly. Mr. Steinbach treated him fairly and with respect.

After four years in New Haven, Joe felt comfortable enough in his new country to persuade his parents to leave Gomel, and in

1908 they arrived with their other children, and once more the family was united.

While employed at the Steinbach Company, Joe was approached by the owner of a small printing shop and offered a half interest in the company for $200.00. He entered into partnership with a Mr. Freidler and worked with him for two years. In 1910 Joe bought out his partner's interest, thus becoming the sole owner of The Columbia Printing Company. So after only six years in the United States, he was in business for himself, and had his family with him in New Haven.

Physically, Joe was slight, no more than 5'2" tall, and always slim and trim. Blessed with a personality that was a great asset to him all through life, he was quiet and reserved, with a pleasant demeanor and good nature, endowed with good common sense that easily earned him the respect and loyalty of customers and friends throughout the community. While his formal school education ended when he was thirteen, his entire lifetime was a learning experience.

The Columbia Printing Co. was located in a store at the corner of Temple and Commerce Streets, just one block from the busy Jewish shopping area of Oak Street. Shortly after becoming the sole owner of the company, he was joined by his younger brother, Louis. They remained partners for fifty three years, until Louis' death in 1963. His older brother, Harry, came to work for the company after World War I.

The company prospered until the small shop's walls bulged with equipment as presses and type stands were added, and stacks of paper, envelopes, and cans of ink filled every nook and cranny. The shop had a very high ceiling, and to add more space, Joe called in a carpenter to add a balcony, where the type cases were moved. The cellar was next converted into the bindery, expanding the capacity of the busy little plant.

Most of the customers in the early days were retail stores located along Oak Street, and in the downtown areas of Temple, Crown, College, Orange, Church and Chapel Streets, all within walk-



Photograph of the interior of the original Columbia Printing Company shop taken about 1912. Joseph Drabkin, at the left, is shown setting type with the traditional printer's typesetting stick in his hand. (COURTESY OF LESTER DRABKIN)

ing distance of the company. A large two wheeled pushcart was loaded with finished printing jobs to be delivered to downtown stores.

By 1924, with business growing, the small print shop was bursting at its seams, and a new location was obtained almost diagonally across the street just off the corner of Commerce and Temple. The new shop was several times the size of the former location; it was in a converted two story former blacksmith shop, on property owned by the I. Newman & Sons corset factory. The entire inside was renovated to accommodate the needs of a printing plant. For the first time Joe and his brother Louis shared an office of their own, in addition to the front office, for a combination telephone receptionist, typist, and bookkeeper.

The larger quarters permitted the addition of more equipment, and Linotype machines were added to speed type composition, as well as new automatic presses and folding machines for the bindery. In addition to English type, Hebrew type faces were added, both in hand-set type and on the Linotype machine.

A considerable amount of printing was done in Yiddish throughout the '20s and '30s, and up to the '40s, for various synagogues, Jewish fraternal organizations, the Hebrew Institute, the Jewish Home for the Aged, etc. There was a store operated by Yale Rosh on lower Oak Street that, in addition to selling Jewish religious objects, distributed the New York Jewish newspapers, the *Forward*, the *Day*, etc. Quite often, synagogues would offer concerts featuring prominent New York cantors, or cantors especially imported for the High Holiday services. Columbia Printing would print circulars advertising these events and deliver them to the Yale Rosh store. They would be inserted into the Sunday edition of the *Forward*, and circulated throughout retail outlets in the greater New Haven area, as well as up into Derby and Ansonia. Other customers for Yiddish circulars were the many kosher butcher shops, fish markets, bakeries and delicatessens that advertised their wares to the large Yiddish-speaking population of New Haven.

It was a custom to send out Jewish New Year's greeting cards imprinted with the name of the sender. People would come into Columbia's office and order one hundred or two hundred cards. At that time Columbia employed a pressman named Ben Greenhouse, who worked on a small, hand-fed press, called in the trade a "job press." During the months of August and September every year, Ben would work all day imprinting names on hundreds of orders for New Year's cards. He had a unique facility for hand feeding cards, envelopes and tickets into the press all day long without missing a beat. Ben worked for Columbia Printing for fifty years until his retirement.

In their new quarters business grew beyond Joe's expectations, and in only five years it was necessary to expand again. He made a deal with I. Newman & Co. that permitted him to build a two-story addition to the plant, doubling its size. An enlarged paper storage area was provided on the second floor and much larger presses were installed on the first floor.

The push-cart for deliveries gave way to a bicycle with a wire basket on which an errand boy could pick up copy and deliver proofs and finished jobs. On larger deliveries Joe or Louis would load the orders into their cars and, with the assistance of an errand boy, deliver the goods.

The roster of customers grew and the company's trading area expanded geographically to the outer limits of New Haven. The list of customers included firms who continued to give their business to Columbia Printing for 30, 40, and even 50 years. That roster included names that have practically all vanished by now from the New Haven scene. Amongst the larger customers were firms like J. Johnson & Co., the leading men's clothing store, the A.M. Rosenberg Co., custom tailors who were growing into a nationwide business, Loew's Poli Theater chain for which Columbia did all the theatrical printing, Shubert Theater, Armstrong Rubber, Botwinik Bros., Lesnow Bros., New Haven Quilt & Pad, Sagal–Lou Dairy, New Haven Dairy, Brock–Hall Dairy, the Yale School of Music, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Majestic Laundry, I. Newman & Co., and the





This page and the next show some of the many Yiddish posters which were printed by Joseph Drabkin at the Columbia Printing Co., advertising Jewish events at the Shubert Theater. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES, PHOTOS BY CARL NEWLIN)


די קינדער זעצען פאר די מהאמער מראדיציע פון זייער
גרויסן פאמער.
SHUBERT THEATRE
Sunday Evening, Dec. 11th
Benefit for the Y. M. & W. H. A.
שובערט מהאמער
זונטאג אוו. דעם 11טן דעצ.
די אדלערס
EDWIN A. RELKIN and SIGMUND WEINTRAUB
Have the Honor to Present the Famous
JACOB P. ADLER FAMILY
For the First Time In New Haven
In JACOB GORDON'S Immortal Drama,
"THE WILD MAN"
Entire Cast Consists of the Sons, Daughters and Widow of the Late
JACOB P. ADLER.
ד. ווילדער מענש
לומהער אדלער
מארא אדלער. לומהער אדלער.
מעלא אדלער. משאולי אדלער.
פרענצים אדלער. אייב אדלער.
זיליא אדלער. אויידווינג אדלער
יאזעף שוידנגאלד
עקסטרא גרויסער אטרעקשאן!
מאר. דושיקאב פ. אדלער
„אהן א היים"
JOSEPH SIDENGOLD
$1.50 אוו $1.00 נומע פימם צו 900
מיקעמס $2.00, $1.50, $1.00 אוו 75 סענם

Congress Bank. The list of retail customers lining Church and Chapel Streets included Moline's, Esther's, Rose Gilbert, Rose Gordon, Ann Allen, Hamilton's, Spector's Jewelers, Gilden's, Louis Levine Jewelers, Arnold A. Perry Jewelers, Sykes & Libby, Loomis Temple of Music, Kramer's Furriers, The Outlet, Linderman's, Albrams, and Lowenthal's Men's Store. Restaurants, which always needed new menus, were steady customers, including Kaysey's, Tasty Toasty, George & Harry's, Eleanor's Sea Grille, Chillis, etc. In those days Columbia probably had a higher concentration of downtown customers than any other printer.

The impressive customer list that Joe built up during Columbia's formative years wasn't due to his being a powerful, overwhelming salesman. On the contrary, he was always gentle and mild-mannered, reserved in his decorum, with a gentle sense of humor and warmth that reached his customers. His lack of a formal high school and college education was more than compensated for by his innate common sense. In talking with him, customers soon sensed that here was a man of integrity, someone they could trust in business dealings. While he experienced, as any businessman does at times in the course of an active business career, trials, tribulations, frustrations and disappointments, he never gave full vent to his feelings. He very rarely lost his temper or raised his voice. His many employees respected, admired, and, in many instances, felt sincere affection for him.

In 1914, Joseph was introduced to a young girl in New York, Ray Goldfarb. After an eight-month courtship they were married and he brought his new bride to New Haven. They became the parents of three children, first a daughter, Sylvia, born in 1916, then Lester in 1918, and Irving in 1920.

In 1939, upon his graduation from college, Lester joined his father in business. After a three-year interruption to serve in the Air Corps during World War II, he returned in 1946 to work with his father in the firm. In 1947 Joe's other son, Irving, also came to the firm after serving in the Air Corps. They remained with the company during their father's lifetime, and continued the business after his

death in 1968. In the 1950s, Louis' son Leonard joined the firm, in a sales capacity, remaining until his father's death in 1966. He then left the company to head another local printing establishment, the Van Dyke Printing Company.

While devoting long hours to business, Joseph still had tremendous energy, a zest for life, and a strong involvement in community, charitable, and professional trade organizations. As far back as 1918, he enrolled Columbia Printing as a member of the national printing trade organization, United Typothetae of America, the forerunner of the Printing Industry of America. He actively participated in the local branch, the Printing Industry of Connecticut, for fifty years and served on the national board of the Printing Industry of America. The New Haven Advertising Club was another organization to which he devoted many years, serving on their board and also as treasurer.

When the Probus Club was first formed in 1924 as a service club for local Jewish business and professional men (Jews were not accepted at that time by the other service clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions), he promptly joined, and remained a member for the rest of his life. His other affiliations included the Cosmopolitan Lodge of the Masonic Order and Horeb lodge of B'nai B'rith. Again, once he joined an organization he was a member for life. He also served on the board of Congregation B'nai Jacob.

Columbia Printing continued its growth after World War II under his guidance and with the added impetus of new sales brought in by Lester and Irving. In the 1950's downtown New Haven was undergoing a massive redevelopment and the shop was right in the path of the new Oak Street Connector due to be built. A new location had to be found. After a long and arduous search, a vacant lot was purchased on Welton Street in Hamden, just over the New Haven town line.

A modern new plant, two and a half times larger than the old and all on one floor, was built in 1958. Much larger presses, with the latest offset technology were added, and in just a few years sales

doubled. In 1960, in commemoration of the firm's fiftieth anniversary, a giant open-house celebration was held. Approximately 450 customers and friends from all over Connecticut (for by now sales had expanded throughout the state) attended. Long rows of tables were set up in the plant and a catered dinner was served. It was probably the highlight of Joe's business career, showing what had been accomplished in fifty years. His pride was visible on his beaming face.

Columbia Printing might have been enough of a career for most men; for Joe Drabkin it was only one of three.

His early love for the theater while a teenager in Russia continued in America. Starting in 1908, while still working for the Steinbach Printing Co. during the day, he often made weekend trips to New York City to enjoy the Yiddish theater and cabarets on the lower East Side. At that time the East Side was home to several Yiddish theatrical companies doing a thriving business with the tens of thousands of Eastern European immigrants arriving in New York each year. On one of these trips, in 1911, he met Edward A. Relkin who was the booking agent for all the Yiddish theatrical companies on their road show tours outside New York. Joe made a handshake deal with Mr. Relkin to be the exclusive representative in Connecticut for all the theatrical companies playing there. That deal lasted for almost thirty years, until 1940, when the Yiddish-speaking audience had declined to the point where it was no longer profitable to bring shows to Connecticut.

Thus was born his second career. He would book a show into the Shubert Theater in New Haven for a Sunday evening performance, often followed by one-night shows in Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport. During the week he would visit New York theaters in the evening to preview a new show before booking it into New Haven. It was on one of these New York visits that he was first introduced to the young girl who was to become his wife.

It was the heyday of the Yiddish theater in America and all the great stars of the day were brought to New Haven under his guidance. Stars who came to the Shubert included Boris Thomashef-



In 1960, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of The Columbia Printing Company, the firm had a large open house celebration; 450 customers, suppliers, and friends attended. Pictured above, at the party, are, left to right: Lester Drabkin, Louis Drabkin, Joseph Drabkin, Leonard Drabkin, and Irving Drabkin. (COURTESY OF LESTER DRABKIN)

sky, Maurice Schwartz, Molly Picon, Jacob Adler, Luther Adler, Stella Adler, Aaron Lebedoff, David Kessler, Madame Kalish, and Julius Nathanson. The theatrical companies would arrive in New Haven Sunday afternoon accompanied by their trucks loaded with scenery, props, and costumes. On several occasions, the stars of the show would be invited to the Drabkin home on Ellsworth Avenue for a Sunday afternoon tea or early supper before their performances in the evening.

Through the friendship that he developed over the years with Edward Relkin, he was included in many of the theatrical activities of the New York theater. He attended testimonial dinners tendered to Maurice Schwartz, in 1938, and to George Jessel at the Friars Club, and was invited to join that prestigious theatrical organization.

He was assisted in the ticket sales in New Haven by David Resnik, who had a list of theater-goers interested in Yiddish shows. Whenever a new show was booked into the Shubert, Mr. Resnik would pick up a block of tickets from Joe at Columbia Printing, and make the rounds of his patrons, dispensing tickets to them. David Resnik, like Joe, was a short man, probably not more than 5'2" tall, with a shock of white hair and a bushy white beard, a twinkle in his eye, and a friendly smile.

When *The Lexicon of the Jewish Theater* was published, listing biographies of actors, producers, director, musicians, and theatrical managers in America, Joseph Drabkin's bio was included.

Joe's attachment to the theater led to many other involvements. When a new Broadway musical, "Strike Up the Band," was booked into the Shubert, Joe secured a block of tickets for the entire membership of the Probus Club and their wives. This was preceded by a Probus Club dinner at the Taft Hotel, attended by the show's composer,George Gershwin, who graciously played the piano for the audience. As a result of this dinner-theater party, Joe was nicknamed by fellow Probians as "Mr. Shubert."

On another occasion when the New Haven Advertising Club was planning its annual summer dinner at the Pavilion in Momauguin,

he worked with Bill Bolton, a prominent local orchestra leader, to secure the appearance of Rudy Vallee for the evening to perform for the guests. Rudy Vallee was at that time at the height of his nationwide popularity as a crooner. Vallee had previously performed with Bill Bolton's orchestra while a student at Yale.

So while a career in printing and simultaneously another in the theater would more than suffice for most citizens, Joe's inexhaustible energies and zest for life led him to still another. This third career was involved in the New Haven Jewish Center. In 1916 Joe became a member of the Pioneer Club, an organization of business and professional people interested in Jewish communal affairs. About that time a Young Men's Hebrew Association and a Young Women's Hebrew Association were formed. They met in rented quarters in downtown New Haven, but the need for a building of their own soon became apparent. The Pioneer Club became involved in trying to bring this to fruition. A tentative budget, for land and a new building, was set at $300,000.00—the big question was, how to raise it? At a meeting of the board of the Pioneer Club in 1923, Joe, who was also treasurer of this organization, proposed that a campaign be undertaken to raise the amount from subscriptions of $1,000.00 each from 300 Jewish business and professional people in New Haven. At that time, $1,000.00 was considered an astronomical amount of money, and the board "pooh-poohed" the idea. Joe proposed that the $1,000.00 be collected at the rate of $100.00 per year for ten years, and he thought that that amount would be financially within reason for the community.

Again the board was dubious and reluctant to proceed. But Joe got up at the meeting and volunteered to go out and personally get the first hundred pledges, saying to the board, "If I do this, will you then go out and get the next two hundred pledges?" The board was hard put not to go along with this proposition and finally acceded.

At the next board meeting a month later Joe produced a small pocket notebook in which he had noted the names of 140 individuals

who had given him their pledge. With this evidence of community commitment before them the board accepted the obligation to obtain the balance of pledges to reach their goal of 300. In short order a total of 305 pledges was secured.

The leaders of the Pioneer Club were still somewhat hesitant to proceed. They had fears about what might happen to the building if some people failed to meet their pledges. However, pressure was put on them to commence with the new headquarters for the YMHA. Land was obtained on Crown Street, across the street from a site that would eventually house the Yale Hope Mission. In the center of the lot was a two-story brick building which in earlier and better days had been a residence.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new Community Center took place in March, 1925. I remember the occasion well, as a small boy holding my father's hand he and my mother had proudly taken me to the ceremony. It was an event to which he had given much of himself, and which meant so much to him. Ground breaking ceremonies for the new Community Center took place in 1925 on a warm, sunny Thursday in March. On the previous Sunday the *New Haven Register* had run a lengthy story along with a full page headline, and an architectural rendering of the proposed new building by Jacob Weinstein.

A bandstand had been erected, decorated with appropriate bunting, and the platform was filled with the officers and directors of the YMHA as well as featured speakers.

For the next several days, steam shovels excavated a large horseshoe-shaped hole around the still-standing building in the center of the property. And then work stopped. Again, the officers of the YMHA (which had absorbed the Pioneer Club by this time) were cautious; they did not feel financially secure enough to proceed further at that time. What if some of the members could not meet their pledges? The delay continued for a few years, and the Center on Crown Street, Joe's dream, was never realized. He was heartsick for

several years over this failure, but his interest in, and continued devotion, to the Community Center never failed.

The YMHA used the building on the Crown Street property for a few years, then merged with the Hebrew Institute on the corner of Dwight Street and Legion Avenue, remaining there until it built its new quarters on Chapel Street.

All through the intervening years Joe continued to work for the YMHA, which had changed its name to the New Haven Jewish Community Center. For fifty years he was an officer of the Center, revolving between the positions of vice-president, financial secretary, and treasurer. He often was asked to be president, always declining the honor, but remained active, taking care of the financial concerns of the organization. In Joe's later years the Center ran annual fund-raising "Cadillac Raffles," selling tickets at $100.00 towards the chance of winning a Cadillac. Every year Joe sold more tickets than any other member, and this, when he was well over eighty years old. The Center recognized his efforts when they presented him with a certificate designating him as "Salesman of the Year."

When the Kovod Society was formed in New Haven, Joe was one of the earliest recipients of the Kovod Key in recognition of his philanthropic activities. In 1966 the Kovod Society tendered him a Testimonial Dinner at the Jewish Center in Recognition of his "Fifty Years of Service to the Jewish Community Center."

It seemed as though his enthusiasm for living must have sprung from a deep well of energy. In his late seventies and early eighties, his lifestyle was still that of an energetic forty-year-old. While he had tapered off his active involvement in the management of Columbia Printing, leaving it in the hands of his sons, he still came to his office daily, if only for just a few hours, to read his mail and to walk through the plant chatting with employees. It kept his mind alert and active—he had not been put "on the shelf" in retirement. He would still go out four or five evenings a week. On one night to the Shubert to see a play, on another to a movie; visiting friends to play bridge, or attending a dinner meeting of the Probus club, or a concert

at Woolsey Hall; and, of course, to board meetings of the Jewish Center.

Joe Drabkin died June 1, 1968, at the age of 84. His three careers had fulfilled him and enriched the lives of many who lived in his beloved New Haven.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: LESTER YALE DRABKIN, a native of New Haven, graduated from Hillhouse High School and received his BS degree from Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University). Upon graduating from college in 1939 he joined his father at The Columbia Printing Co. and succeeded him as president of the firm upon his death in 1968. He retired in 1989 after fifty years in printing, except for a three-year interval in the Army Air Corps during World War II.

He has been active in the local community, having served as President of the Probus Club of New Haven, and on the boards of Congregation Mishkan Israel and the New Haven Jewish Community Center. He was recently sent on a mission for the United Nations Development Programme to Malaysia as a management consultant to the printing industry. He is an Associate Fellow at Timothy Dwight College, Yale University. He resides with his wife, Meryl, in Woodbridge, and is the proud father of three sons.

My Life In New Haven 1917–1926

by Joseph Levine

I WAS NINE YEARS OLD IN FEBRUARY 1917 when the train from New York arrived in the New Haven railroad depot. For me, my mother, two brothers, and a sister, this was the end of a two year journey as refugees during World War I. We came to New Haven to be reunited with my father and five older children who preceded us to America. They first lived in New York City and later established a home in New Haven as did my maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Mendel Brown, and uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Berman.

My family came from Molodechna in Russia, a small town midway between Vilna and Minsk. The oldest Levine child, Henry, was the first to come to America. He then helped another brother come and they in turn assisted the other older children and father to join them. When World War I broke out in 1914, mother and the four younger children, including me, were about to leave for America. Because of the fighting, we could not leave. As the Russians lost one battle after another, the war was brought closer to home, and one day in 1915, everyone in Molodechna was ordered to leave the town. Mother and four children left Molodechna, on a rainy morning, on a flat rail car. The train made stops at every station to pick up more people with their meager belongings. We did not know our final destination and when we arrived in the city of Minsk, the passengers were ordered to leave the train. Many of the passengers, including our family, were marched to the synagogue square where

the refugees filled the three synagogues. After two or three days, mother located an uncle who lived in Minsk, and we moved into his small crowded apartment.

I was eight years old then, but the memory of life in Minsk has not been forgotten. The city was filled with refugees. Food became scarce, and we stood in line for hours to receive a loaf of black bread. I attended *cheder* in Minsk. When mother learned that the Russians were picking up young boys and sending them to the front, she feared that my twelve year old brother would be selected, and as life was getting more and more dangerous in Minsk, she decided to leave.

It was then that we started a journey of almost two years, which ended in New Haven in February 1917. We traveled for a long time in freight cars across Russia and Siberia until we arrived in the city of Harbin in Manchuria, China. We lived for some time in Harbin, where the local Jews established a refugee center.

We were housed and fed in this center together with other Jewish families who fled from Russia. Mother finally made contact with our family in America, who made arrangements for us to join them. From Harbin we started another journey which took us to Korea and Japan and then across the Pacific Ocean. We made one stop in Honolulu and continued to San Francisco. The sea voyage on the small Japanese boat, the *Nippon Maru*, took twenty-six days. From San Francisco we traveled by train to New York, and then to New Haven.

Our first home in New Haven was on the third floor of a six-family, three-story building on Orchard Street across from the Orchard Street School. Oak Street was a block away. I soon learned that we were not the only greenhorns in the neighborhood, which was almost one hundred percent Jewish. Although the children spoke English, good and bad, almost all of the parents spoke Yiddish, which was the language in the homes. I now realize how fortunate I was to have had older brothers and a sister who spoke English and who helped me and the new arrivals to learn the language.

Our apartment was on the top floor of the three-story building, which was occupied by two families. There was only one toilet, in the hall, for the two tenants on the floor. The apartment was gas lit, and

it seemed that someone of our family was constantly being sent to the store to buy a new gas mantle. The coal for the kitchen stove was kept in the cellar where each family had a bin. There was no electricity, no central heating, and of course none of the modern conveniences which we take for granted today, such as radio, telephone, television, and other electrical appliances.

Oak Street, near our house, was lined with small stores. On this street were the grocery stores, the butchers, bakers, tailors, fish stores, shoe makers, and hardware and clothing stores. Storekeepers and their families lived in backs of the stores or above them, or on side streets. The stores were closed on Saturdays, when, in the afternoon, many Jews walked up and down the street meeting their friends. On Saturday evenings, after Sabbath, the stores were crowded, especially the food stores. I can still remember seeing the crowds in Gold's dairy store, and in Silverman's delicatessen. My family dealt with Ratner's grocery store.

The store I remember best is Rossofsky's. It was in this clothing store where my two brothers and I were taken to purchase our first American clothes. The store smelled of camphor, which was used for packing new clothes. Strange how you remember such little things. Many years later I learned that Judge Ross, of New Haven, was the son of the storekeeper who outfitted me in 1917.

The Orchard Street shul was several blocks from my home. Here, in this small synagogue, my family worshipped as long as we lived on Orchard Street. Around the corner from our house was the nickelodeon on Oak Street where we paid five cents for admission and where William S. Hart and Pearl White became my American hero and heroine. On nights when the movie management gave away dishes or toys, the barn-like theater was packed with whole families. The movies may have been silent, but the noise and excitement of the crowd provided additional entertainment for me.

I will never forget my first day in public school. My oldest sister, Selma, who had been in America for about five years, took my sister Rivka, older brother Schmulka, younger brother Yana, and me, Yasef, to register in the Orchard Street School. The kindly principal, Miss Hotchkiss, greeted us, and the first thing she did was to give us American names. We became Beatrice, Samuel, Jonas, and Joseph.

Later at the dinner table we discovered that we already had one Samuel in the family, a name another brother received on Ellis Island. In our family, we continued to have two Samuels, one Samuel Israel, and the other Samuel Brown Levine.

After we were given our American names and the necessary registration forms were completed, Miss Hotchkiss accompanied us to our classes. Since I could not speak English, I didn't know what the principal said to the second grade teacher who gave me a sheet of paper and a pencil and a seat. All of the children looked younger than I. I did what was most natural for me and began to copy from the little girl on my right. As she made a line, I did the same. Later I discovered that the children were printing their names and I had covered my sheet with the name FRANCES GREEN!

Most of the children in the Orchard Street School were Jewish, though there were some Italian, Irish, and black youngsters in the classes. We played together in the school yard where I improved my English. The origin or color of my classmates was never a problem. More important was the behavior in the classroom where we respected and sometimes feared our teachers. When my family moved, I attended the Derby Avenue School, and later, the Zunder School on George Street, from which I graduated in 1922. I then attended Hillhouse High School, graduating in 1926. In the fall of that year I entered Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania, from which I received a degree in 1930, and subsequently continued my studies in the Jewish School for Social Work and at Columbia University.

I recall that my father and grandfather joined a new congregation on George Street which had purchased an old church with some adjoining buildings. This was then known as the *Bolsheviki Shul* [Congregation Tefereth Adas Israel, now occupied by the Salvation Army]. Rabbi Elkin and his family lived in one of the buildings which was also used for the Talmud Torah. I studied with Rabbi Elkin who prepared me for my Bar Mitzvah. I well remember how I delivered my Bar Mitzvah sermon in Yiddish. My *drosha* was based on the *sedra* we read at the Sabbath service. I quoted Talmudic scholars and rabbis, but what I was saying had little real meaning to me. The rabbi and my family were proud of how I conducted myself, but there was

no fancy party after the service. My studies continued with Rabbi Elkin after my Bar Mitzvah.

When I entered Hillhouse High School in the fall of 1922 we lived on Sherman Avenue, near George Street. In Hillhouse I earned my class letter as the manager of the class basketball team, joined Phi Beta Pi fraternity and was active on the school paper.

As I look back I realize, that with few exceptions, almost all of my friends worked when school was out. I was in the country only a short time when I began to peddle newspapers. In 1917 the *New Haven Register* was printed in a building on Crown Street in the heart of the business section. An hour or two before the papers came off the press, both sides of the street near the newspaper building were lined with ponies and small buggies. These belonged to the men who had neighborhood newspaper routes. As the papers came off the press, the men rushed to be among the first to get their bundles of papers. The youngsters like myself had to push our way to get our papers. At the most, I invested twenty-five cents for papers which sold for two cents. As soon as I got my papers, I rushed to the corner of Church and Chapel Streets, shouting, "Get your *Register*—just out!"

To me, the corner of Church and Chapel was the busiest corner in the world. On the corner of the Green was the major transfer point for the open trolleys. The streets were busy with trolleys, horses and wagons, but not too many autos. All of the important stores were nearby as was the City Hall, Court House, and the Public Library. If I sold all of my papers, I would rush back to the newspaper building on Crown Street to buy more. When I had too much competition from the other boys on the corner, I would walk up and down Chapel Street or on the side streets peddling the papers. Rainy days were always difficult for us newsboys, and we often couldn't sell our initial purchase. When it threatened to rain, some of the boys quickly sold all the papers they had for half of their cost. I made more than one such purchase and more than once regretted it.

The most exciting day for me as a newsboy was on November 11, 1918 when World War I ended. I remember how the downtown streets were filled with people. The factories were closed, and the workers paraded carrying all kinds of noisemakers. Whistles and

horns blew all day. I don't know how many papers I sold that day, but I do recall that I didn't get home until late because I remained downtown for the fireworks on the Green. The park was jammed with people and I was startled to see the elaborate fireworks which began just as it was getting dark. The ceremonies ended with the lighting of a huge American flag and the face of president Woodrow Wilson. I was a very tired little boy of eleven as I came home late to my worried parents. They of course were happy because the end of the war meant that two members of my family who were in the service would come home and my oldest brother, Henry, who was home to say good-bye before leaving for overseas, would not have to go.

My family was not poor, and I really didn't have to work, but it was the thing to do. In addition to peddling papers I also had a job in a small cabinet shop. Here with all the dust, I almost ruined my eyes and quit. For some time, I worked three evenings a week in the office of Dr. Sam Hershman where I answered the telephone on nights when the regular nurse was off. For several years around Easter time, I delivered Easter lilies for a Chapel Street florist. It was no fun riding a bicycle delivering the Easter lilies always fearing that I would fall and damage the plant. During Sukkoth, I earned money by bringing the *lulov* and *esrog* to the homes of the members of our congregation before they went to work. Each family gave me a little money, but I had to rush from home to home fearing that I would be late for school.

I must have been about twelve years old when I bought my first newspaper route. It was an area adjoining a large cemetery and not too far from my home. I only knew that a cemetery was full of dead people and not a place to visit. When I bought the route, the days were long and it was still light when I finished delivering the papers and I had to pass the cemetery on my way home. However, as the days got shorter I had to pass the cemetery in the dark and I ran as fast as I could to get away from that neighborhood. Needless to say, I soon found another purchaser for the paper route.

My next business venture was the purchase of a corner stand on Chapel Street near the Yale Art School. With the stand, I took over the delivery of papers in the area to Yale students and others.

But the most pleasant experiences I had as a newsboy was on a route out in the country. On each Sunday morning at about five AM, I would pick up bundles of local and New York papers on the corner of Church and Chapel Streets and take the trolley to Cheshire. On the way, I would drop bundles of papers and I would travel to near the end of the line. I would then start walking towards New Haven delivering papers on route. Often I would walk as far as a quarter of a mile off the main road to deliver papers.

My favorite resting spot was a farm near Mt. Carmel. Here, the old farmer and his wife would always have a hot glass of milk and cake for me. The route covered about five miles and I delivered papers in all kinds of weather. Unfortunately in those days, there was no extra charge for home delivery. However, I was happy doing this on Sunday mornings and I gave mother all of my earnings. When I wanted a bike or mandolin, I paid for it out of my allowance. However, when I left for college, in 1926, I learned that mother had saved all the money I gave her and it helped to pay for part of my college education.

I must have been a freshman in high school when I got a job at Jake's hot dog stand selling orange drinks. This was one of the busiest stands at Savin Rock, open about eight months a year. I spent a summer on this job, working long hours, and at night I took the open trolley back to New Haven. These were the days, in the 1920s, when Savin Rock attracted thousands of people every weekend. I later learned that a number of other Jewish boys from New Haven, some of whom later graduated from the Yale Law and Medical Schools, earned their expenses by working at Jake's.

From my sophomore year until I graduated from Hillhouse High School, I worked in Antaki's on Orange Street. This well-known shop was owned by two Armenian brothers who employed my sister, Beatrice, as a buyer. I swept the floor, packed and unpacked merchandise, and later, was permitted to wait on customers. The Antaki store gave me more than money. It gave me an education and appreciation for fine linens, china, and oriental rugs which were sold in the store. The Antakis were very proud of the merchandise they sold and the name they established for themselves in New Haven. During the Christmas season, the store was so

crowded that a policeman was stationed at the door to control the traffic.

I left New Haven in the fall of 1926 when I enrolled in Franklin and Marshall College and my family moved away in 1929. Since then, I was in New Haven for a short business trip in 1937 and returned a second time many years later. On the latter visit I found the house where we lived in 1917 still standing, and the Orchard Street School. Oak Street, part of which became Legion Avenue, was gone. Where the stores I mentioned earlier used to be, I found only empty lots being prepared for a large building program. The whole area was leveled, including the George Street School and the homes where my friends had lived. Rose Street, which had a large synagogue in the 1920s, was an empty lot. I learned that many Jews were now living in the suburbs. I visited Savin Rock too, but there was little to show that this was, at one time, the Coney Island of Connecticut. The beach resorts of Woodmont and Momauguin, where my friends and their families had summer homes, had also changed.

Yes, there had to be the inevitable changes during the past seventy-two years since I arrived in New Haven. I am pleased to know that there is still an active Jewish community in the city, but life for youngsters today certainly seems very much different than the one that I enjoyed. Memories linger on.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joseph Levine, presently living in Fort Wayne, Indiana, retired in 1972 after spending forty years as a social worker in America and Europe. He was a member of the first group of social workers who were sent to Europe by the American Joint Distribution Committee to help the survivors of the Holocaust. He spent the year of 1945 as Regional Director for the "Joint" in Bavaria, Germany. On his return, he worked for the United Jewish Appeal for six months. From 1947 to 1972 he was the Executive Director of the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation. Since 1972 he has been directing the work of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, headquartered in Fort Wayne, which he helped to organize.

The World of My Father
Harris Ginsberg of State Street

by Ruth Ginsberg Caplan

THE YEAR 1989 WAS THE one-hundredth anniversary of Harris Ginsberg's arrival in New Haven.

The date is so vivid in my memory because, as children, we heard frequently of the Blizzard of 1888, which had predated Harris' arrival by one year. The blizzard blanketed New Haven and its environs by impassable snowfall and drifts. The *New Haven Register*, at the time, described it as a "bewildering, belligerent, blinding blizzard." The headlines on the first day read, "Fury on the Sound – Travel knocked endwise – Horse Cars stalled," etc., etc. Drifts were as much as twenty feet deep and in some shady places the piled up snow remained until June. To go back, Harris was the oldest of the seven children of Joshua Isaac and Shayna Chaya Ginsberg, born and raised in Vilna, Poland, then a part of Russia. He received a very good education in Hebrew at one of the fine Yeshivas, which, at that time and for many years thereafter, was an outstanding center of Jewish learning. It was the Holocaust and its many heart–rending events, which destroyed that center.

At age seventeen, in order to avoid conscription into the Russian army, which was considered to be almost a death sentence, he left his home to come to America, alone, not knowing anyone who would greet him at these shores, and not knowing anyone on the ship, which was bound for New York. Fortunately,

he became friendly with one young man, Samuel Aaronson, who was bound for New Haven, and Harris accompanied him to this city. Samuel Aaronson and Harris Ginsberg lived in New Haven until their respective deaths and maintained a friendship through all those years. Samuel Aaronson had established a business, the wholesale and retail sale of dry goods, on lower Oak Street—no longer in existence after the extensive redevelopment of the city. His son, Lester, now retired, but still a resident of New Haven, served as Judge of the Superior Court for many years.

Would we, as parents today, send our children into the (almost) unknown as Harris' parents did? Were those parents devoid of parental love for, and attachment to, their children? The answer is definitely "NO." When Harris' family, back in Vilna, heard of his being engaged to marry Lena Kalison, his mother (my grandmother) made a trip on foot, of many hours' duration, to visit the family of the bride-to-be, to be sure of their worthiness of becoming an addition to her *mishpocha*, her extended family.

When Harris arrived in New Haven, without any money, without any family from whom to seek support, and wishing for kosher food, of course, he found his way to the home of Fannie Alderman on Spruce Street (also no longer in existence because of redevelopment) and there met his future bride—my mother. They were married on Purim Day of 1894. Fannie Alderman was my mother's aunt, a sister of her deceased mother, known to all her nieces and nephews, as the "Mume," and even referred to by that term by her stepchildren, the children of her husband, who had a large family of children by his first wife.

To go back to Fannie Alderman—she was the second wife of Velvel Alderman—and by the time *they* were married, all of his children were grown and married with families of their own. It was also the second marriage for Fannie, she having been divorced in the old country by her husband because she bore him no children. (There was no hint, ever, ever, of the *husband's* deficiency, how far we have come in that field—artificial insemination, sperm banks, in vitro fertilization, etc., etc.!)

Being the second wife of Velvel Alderman, and his children taking precedence in all respects, Fannie found it necessary (or

desirable) to supplement her income by her own devices, which led her into her very simple catering business, but it was not so simple. The availability of kosher food in New Haven being so limited, in fact almost nonexistent in its cooked form, she provided one hot meal a day, mostly to newly arrived immigrants. Even the available uncooked food in New Haven, being not of the quality which Fannie wanted to serve, and possibly a few pennies more expensive, she would travel to New York City, prior to the Sabbath, on the ship, the *Richard Peck*. The ship made an excursion, to New York City and back, on Sundays, a trip which was considered top entertainment for young people. It left Belle Dock, as its berth was called, early in the morning and returned late in the evening.

Fannie Alderman's trips on the *Richard Peck* were anything but entertainment. Other than Sundays, the ship left New Haven late in the afternoon, arriving in lower Manhattan around midnight, where she made her purchases of food, and then came back to New Haven, arriving in time to prepare the chicken, soup, and gefilte fish, and to bake all the braided Challah for the holy Sabbath.

My mother, when she arrived in New Haven, made her home with her cousin, Mrs. Harris Lapides, but had her dinners with her Mume, where she met her future husband, my father.

My mother's departure from the old country and arrival in New Haven was much easier for her than for my father. It was her two older brothers, who had made their home in New York City, who provided her passage to this country. As was the custom, the first born, or more probably the oldest son, made the trip to the United States, worked in whatever field he could find employment, lived very frugally, and managed to pay for the *Schiffs Karte*, as passage on a ship was referred to, and brought the second child over, who repeated the process. My mother, therefore, had two sponsors of her emigration. Those two brothers, and several who came later, remained in New York City and engaged in the manufacture and other phases of the ladies' clothing business.

My mother found employment in New Haven in the factory of the Strouse, Adler corset company, one of a large number of young immigrant Jewish women. The work was quite foreign to this young woman, who had left her father's home on a small farm in a town many miles from the large city of Vilna. Operating a sewing machine in itself was a complete departure from the life in a rural setting which she had known. Most of the girls working at the sewing machines were Jewish immigrants, who, by adhering to the use of Yiddish, their mother-tongue, remained "greenhorns," as they were known, for a longer period of time than might otherwise have been the case. The girls, more often than not, carried in with them a roll or a bagel, which they ate while sitting at their sewing machines—their only nourishment until they returned to their homes in the evening. The working day, at the time, was surely ten hours, and more likely, twelve. They had come to the *Goldene Land*, and they were determined to find it.

In recalling her experience as an employee of the Strouse, Adler Company, my mother often recounted the many stories of Col. I. M. Ullman coming to the aid of any Jewish employee of the firm who might have had even the slightest brush with the law, or needed assistance in the matter of naturalization, and so on. She always recounted these incidents with deep thanks for his personal attention to them.

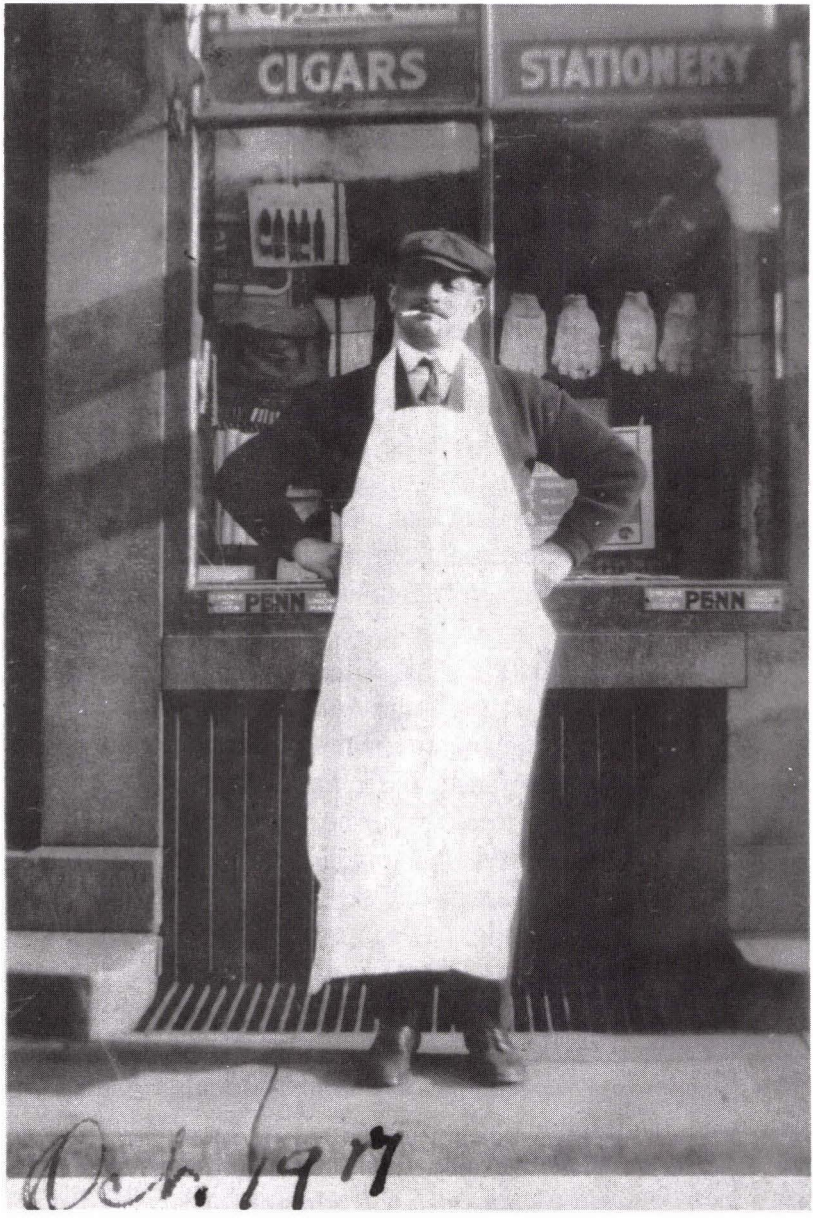
Prior to his marriage, my father had already become a member of the Congregation B'nai Israel, which had been organized in 1892. Their synagogue, which stood on Rose Street, in the Congress Avenue–Lafayette Street area, and was most often referred to as the "Rose Street Shul," housed the congregation until it was acquired by the Yale New Haven Hospital, for its expansion. The architecture of the building was similar to that of the B'nai Jacob Congregation on George Street, Beth Israel on Orchard Street, and Temple Mishkan Israel on Orange Street, having a long flight of stairs from street level to the front entrance, high above. Of the four synagogues built in that style, only Beth Israel, the "Orchard Street Shul," still remains as a functioning synagogue. It must be noted, however, that the Mishkan Israel Temple, built in 1896, is still standing but it no longer houses the congregation, which relo-

cated to its beautiful new structure on Ridge Road in Hamden in 1960.

Also, several months prior to his marriage, my father had bought a retail store on State Street, for the total sum of one hundred dollars. The purchase included the stock and fixtures—and of course its good will—as well as the meager furnishings of two large rooms at the rear, separated by a wall, which were used as the living quarters—a kitchen and bedroom. These served for many years, until the family moved into a small flat of a two-family house on Osborn Street, just around the corner from the State Street location. They lived there until 1919, when Harris purchased the building on State Street—twenty-five years after having started his business there. He modernized the apartments on the upper floors, installing indoor plumbing and central heat, both of which were considered, at that time, to be luxuries.

During the earliest years, my mother tended the store, while my father, with a pack of merchandise on his back, made calls on his select clientele, often walking as far as Branford. The sale of two sheets and two pillow slips, with a towel or two to a future bride, was considered a "big" sale. Many times the sale was consummated on credit, making any number of subsequent trips necessary to collect the balance. Later he discontinued that activity and devoted all of his time to the business in the store. He enlarged the store after the living quarters were dismantled and added many lines of merchandise. Originally, these included candy—much of it sold by the penny's worth, cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco; as well as a line of family dry goods. Children's stockings, of knitted cotton, which at that time were long enough to cover the leg above the knee, were available in black or brown, and white for summer. By today's standards, they would be termed unattractive to the utmost.

When a freezer was added, so that ice cream could be sold, it was a big event, as was also the addition of a peanut vending machine from which hot peanuts could be dispensed. That machine was kept on the sidewalk in front of the store, because of the danger from the live charcoal which it burned.



Harris Ginsberg standing proudly in front of his store on State Street (near Elm) in 1917. (COURTESY OF RUTH CAPLAN)

The first Jews to come into the area were Morris Puklin and his family of several sons and one daughter. Also Morris' brother, Charles, who was associated with him in the wholesale business of selling paper twine and a variety of other products. It was an extensive endeavor for that time, employing a full-time bookkeeper and a truck for delivery. The bookkeeper worked at a desk in an unheated room, and came to my mother's kitchen many times a day to warm her hands so that she could write.

The early schooling for Harris' children was provided at the Skinner School, which stood at the corner of State and Summer Streets, a wooden structure of two floors of classrooms, offering education from the first through sixth grade levels. No kindergarten classes were offered, the children entering school in the first grade. How much improved public education is today, with kindergarten training and Head Start advantages.

When Harris' oldest child, his daughter Edith, my oldest sister, entered the school system, she barely understood English. Even though Harris and his wife spoke sufficient English to conduct their business at the store, all the conversation in their home was in Yiddish, but Edith learned, and was at the head of her classes for many years.

Many children at the school were from families which resided in the Franklin–Hamilton Street area. Edith's perennial rival for first rank in her classes was Harry Silver, later a physician, whose brother, Samuel Silver, became a prominent lawyer in New Haven.

So the child taught the parents, but as the younger children grew up, they already knew English well, and used it. Harris, during this period, taught himself to read and write English. Night school or classes to help the newly arrived Americans were scarce, so he accomplished it himself and became quite proficient.

Many of the families in the vicinity were of Irish descent, who described themselves as "lace–curtain Irish," a term which was in no way construed as derogatory.

After Skinner School the children transferred to Orange Street School, at the corner of Orange and Wall Streets, for seventh and eighth grades prior to entering high school. The Orange

Street School had previously housed the high school. Hillhouse High School was then on double sessions, the upper grades attending class during the morning hours until 12:30, and the Freshman class coming in at 1:00. It was devised as a "temporary" plan pending the erection of another building, which was accomplished many years later to accommodate the students studying commercial courses.

The reputation of Hillhouse High School, in those early years, was excellent, and many of Yale's students were its products, including one of Harris' sons, Albert, who also was accepted to Yale's Law School, from which he graduated in 1929. In his practice, Albert was associated with David Richman and Samuel Silver, mentioned above. David Richman, the other member of the law firm, was the Referee in Bankruptcy and continued in this position for many years.

Harris, during those early years, displayed his love for things above the mundane, when, after much soul-searching, he appropriated to himself sufficient funds from the meager earnings of his business to travel to New York City twice. First to hear the renowned Cantor, "Josele" Rosenblatt, and again to attend the World's Fair.

Albert continued in the practice of law until his death in 1966, having established a reputation as a competent land researcher and conveyor. In that capacity he served many of the Jewish organizations as they acquired land for expansion; the old Hebrew Institute, the original building of the YMHA, which later became the Jewish Community Center on Chapel Street; the land which became the site of Camp Laurelwood, and others.

During that period Albert was involved in the activities of B'nai Brith and also served on the committee which selected Rabbi Maurice Hecht as Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox population. Rabbi Hecht related—with much gratitude—the fact that Albert Ginsberg was the only one on the search committee who came to the railroad station to greet him when he arrived in town to assume his duties.

Harris' younger children were Morse, who attended the University of Pennsylvania's School of Electrical Engineering, and Hannah, both of whom still live in New Haven.

When Harris died in 1942, five years after retiring from his original business, he left his widow, who survived him by twenty-three years.

Had he been asked prior to his death, I am sure he would have been grateful for his history in this country—a young man of seventeen who arrived at these shores with no worldly possessions, no family to which to turn, who helped each younger sibling to emigrate, to have raised his family and seen each one educated and well-established—he would surely have said, "my cup runneth over."

Referring back to the time when the children were in the earlier years of their schooling, there were no facilities for education in the history of the Jews, or in their culture. At one point, I, at the age of ten, eleven or twelve, enrolled in a class which was held in the building of the Hebrew Institute, at 304 Crown Street, which met Sunday mornings. Who organized it, what part of the Jewish population of New Haven it was intended to reach, I do not know. What is clear in my memory is that the enrollment included girls (only) who resided in various parts of the city, Orchard Street, George Street, and I, from State Street. I remember clearly walking through the Green from the corner of Elm and Church Streets, diagonally to the corner of College and Chapel Streets and then to the Crown Street location.

Of the girls enrolled in the class, I remember two sisters of the Rahm family, Martha, who later married Dr. Louis White, well-known orthodontist; and Eva, who married Harry Silverman, longtime luncheonette owner; Stella Koskoff (of the well-known family of musicians) whose romance with, and subsequent marriage to the teacher of the class, became the highlight of the peripheral interests.

Teaching the class was a young Yale Student, a Hartford native, Louis Nahum by name, who continued to study at Yale

through Medical School, and later married Stella, who was very well known through her teaching of piano playing. Dr. Louis Nahum, in his career, became well known in the treatment of heart diseases, which he continued until his death. I continued to be a member of the class during its entire history, one or two years, it's not clear in my mind which, but certainly not more than two.

My personal history continued with graduation from Hillhouse High School, Class of 1917, having been Valedictorian at graduation on the same program with Morton Berman, as Salutatorian, who entered the Rabbinate and occupied important pulpits, all of them away from New Haven, however.

Also on the program was a third Jewish graduate, Morris Sweetkind, who read an original poem. Only two other graduates participated in the program, both of whom were non-Jewish. Morris, after college, joined the faculty of the Rosenbaum Tutoring School, but after one year joined the Cheshire Academy where he taught English for more than fifty years. After his retirement in 1976, the library was named in his honor, the Sweetkind Library. He still resides in New Haven.

The Class of 1917 from Hillhouse High was unique in having received its diplomas from then Mayor Samuel Campner, the only Jewish Mayor which New Haven could boast of in all its history to this date. Samuel Campner was President of the Board of Aldermen when John Tower, then Mayor, passed away, and Mr. Campner was in line to take the oath of office, but there was one obstacle. Campner was twenty-nine years of age, whereas the law required that the Mayor be at least thirty-five; whereupon the State law was amended to make it possible for him to assume the office.

When the original term of office, which John Tower would have served, expired, Samuel Campner ran for reelection, but was defeated by David Fitzgerald, a very prominent politician, known affectionately as "Little Davie" to distinguish him from another David Fitzgerald, a businessman whose business required many favors of the political system, but who was of much taller stature. So ended the political career of Samuel Campner.

Reverting again to the education of the Ginsberg children: The girls were taught to read Hebrew under the tutelage of the *Melamed*, Rabbi Hillel Froman, whose grandson, Howard L. Frohman, documents his history in *Jews in New Haven, Volume II*, pages 49–56. Rabbi Froman came to our home to teach each of us three girls. The boys, who were younger, however, attended *cheder* four or five days a week on William Street, following dismissal from public school, sitting on hard wooden benches, and now and then being tapped on the knuckles by the wooden ruler. In addition, the boys were expected to accompany their teacher to Sabbath services at Mogen David Synagogue on Bradley Street, pictured in the aforementioned *Volume II*, on page 56.

Howard Frohman mentions "the Ginsbergs" among the other students; but he does not, however, mention Samuel Silver, of a Hamilton Street family, who practiced law very successfully for many years. As a graduate of the *cheder* (and the Yale School of Law), Samuel Silver was in the process of sponsoring a testimonial to Rabbi Froman, but the latter's untimely and tragic death in an automobile accident precluded the observance of that testimonial.

Referring back again to High School graduation, and a course at a secretarial school, I took a position in the office of a law firm, the members of which consisted of Isadore Resnik, Harry Edlin, Julius Maretz, Bertrand Salzman, and later, Abraham Weissman. Harry Edlin was, undoubtedly, the most scholarly in the interpretation of the law and was called upon most frequently to write the legal briefs. Julius Maretz's practice took him into the lower courts, pleading the cases of minor offenders. He continued in his practice well past his eightieth year, almost until his death. One of his children, Fred Maretz, continues to reside in New Haven, pursuing a successful career in real estate.

Bertrand Salzman was the son of Henry Salzman, one of the partners in the firm of Adler, Salzman & Adler, which started its business in the sale of liquor—and steamship tickets. At that time, with many waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe coming to these shores, the steamship business was quite brisk, and they eventually became private bankers, first in the partnership name,

and later as the Congress Bank & Trust Company, which continued until the depression years, when the bank was absorbed by the then Union & New Haven Trust Company. Bertrand Salzman continued in the practice of law until his death at a comparatively early age.

Isadore Resnik was the senior member of the firm, which maintained offices at 152 Temple Street during its entire history, but had gradually abandoned the law practice, and devoted most of his time to business and real estate pursuits, owning, at various times, real estate in the center of the business section of New Haven. Of his family of three sons and one daughter, his oldest son, Burton was well known as a golfer. Abraham Weissman left the firm after only one year, and established his own practice.

During my years with the law office, several of the men, notably Isadore Resnik and Julius Maretz, both very fun-loving by nature, created a very loosely–formed "club" (if that is the correct term with which to describe it), which they called "The Black Handers." They played what could be called practical jokes on unsuspecting individuals, sometimes unfortunately, with embarrassing results.

On several occasions when the actor Al Jolson was appearing in stage presentations at the Shubert Theater, he was "raked over the coals," to use the vernacular, but took it all very good-naturedly. Eventually, after being so initiated, he was inducted as a full-fledged member of the "Black Handers" and was presented with the insignia of the organization, a small pin to be attached to the lapel of a man's jacket, with white background and the likeness of the five fingers of a hand, in black.

Jolson wore the pin very proudly, but at one time, in New York City, was apprehended by the police and taken into custody, in the suspicion that he might have been connected with the notorious "Black-Handers" of the Italian Mafia "fame." Much telephoning between the police of New York City and New Haven followed, before it was finally established that the organization which was represented by the pin had no sinister motives. I can remember the excitement and tension created at the law office while Isadore Resnik as "President" (as he was known) endeav-

ored to convince the authorities that the organization's only purpose was fun.

Many of the pranks originated after hours at the law office. At other times, pranks originated during meal time at a large round table in a rear private dining room at Murray's Restaurant on Church Street, owned and operated by Murray Caplan, whom I later married.

The patrons of the private dining room at the round table were predominantly well-known doctors, dentists, lawyers, and other professional and businessmen. Many plans for fund-raising by the many local organizations were discussed there, prominent among them was the Jewish Community Center, then being planned and built at 1156 Chapel Street, between York and Park Streets, which still stands at that location, but which has been sold. One particular endeavor was initiated by Robert Savitt (of the jewelry business), the Century Club as it was known, requiring a donation of one hundred dollars for membership, which was used for a specific purpose in the construction. Also, many legal problems were resolved and business transactions, too, were initiated there.

Although there was never any formal organization of the group, when, in 1941, Murray's Restaurant was closed, the many patrons at the large round table in the rear dining room presented to Murray Caplan a beautiful desk clock with the inscription on a small brass tab, "Presented to Murray Caplan, in high esteem, by the Knights of the Round Table."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: RUTH GINSBERG CAPLAN, a life-long resident of New Haven, graduated from Hillhouse High School with the Class of 1917—the only class which received its diplomas from Samuel Campner, New Haven's only Jewish mayor. she has devoted a large part of her life to the causes of many Jewish charities, particularly Camp Laurelwood, where she and her children established an endowment fund for scholarships for underprivileged Jewish children.



Herbert Setlow's birthday party guests in 1922. This photo was taken in his backyard at 22 Dwight Street. Pictured, left to right, are:

Back row: Herbert Setlow, Ursula Setlow, James Doyle, Bernadine Setlow (Tafeen), Harold Banquer;

Middle row: Sylvia Feldman, Richard Tyner, Dorothy Krall, Charles Doyle, Edith Alper, Harvey Ladin;

Front row: Milton Banquer, Debra (last name unknown), Shirley Banquer, Leonard Schiller, Joyce Chernoff, Esther Setlow (Koenigsberg).

(NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

Growing Up—Middle Class

by Herbert D. Setlow

SINCE THIS CENTURY is ninety percent history, the recollections of growing up as members of middle income Jewish families should not be forgotten.

My comments are about middle income Jews, but I must acknowledge that there were also Jews of very limited circumstances suffering hardship, many supporting themselves meagerly as pushcart peddlers and laborers, artisans, and small shop keepers. There were also some wealthy Jewish families in the German Jewish community. They had lived in New Haven for as many as four generations and were the proprietors of substantial food markets, corset factories, clothing and specialty stores, department stores, a piano factory, retail music stores, hardware, and drug stores. They were leaders in statewide politics and instrumental in establishing community-wide philanthropies and the first hospital in the community. This is *not* the story of these people.

I remember expecting and getting Chanukah *gelt*, but still hanging stockings on Christmas Eve for whatever benefits might be derived. Almost everyone enjoyed Passover seders and, throughout the holiday, Passover-accepted foods were served even at homes of non-observant Jews. Certainly, we looked forward to *homentashen* at Purim, for when it came time to enjoying traditional foods, we were "gastronomical" Jews.

The extent to which we observed tradition depended to a great extent on whether we had grandparents living with us, a common circumstance. Many families who no longer believed in the observance of kashruth kept kosher kitchens so that parents and grandparents could comfortably visit and eat in their homes.

A great many Eastern European Jews came to America for freedom, and broke away from the impositions and restrictions imposed upon them by European Jewish Orthodoxy. The German Jewish community had already established the Reform movement, observing only those traditions with which they felt they could be comfortable in an American environment. Their young people attended their religious classes and they offered social programs for young people at the Temple. Services and practices at the synagogues established by the Eastern European Jews were Orthodox, rejected by many adults, and not equipped to attract children and youth.

The Conservative movement was just developing within the existing synagogues and there were marked changes, but in 1910, except for Mishkan Israel, the concept of dues-paying membership was not customary, and institutions depended on the sale of tickets and income from *aliyahs* on the High Holy days. The vast majority did not belong anywhere, but bought tickets at synagogues or for services conducted by the Jewish Home for the Aged and the Hebrew Institute. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur most available seats at services were occupied.

Mishkan Israel did not believe in Bar Mitzvah. The Reform movement found that it only resulted in the end of formal Jewish education and preferred to keep its young people in school until confirmation. Some of the other synagogues established Sunday schools and Hebrew education, finally resulting, about mid-century, in a community ruling requiring the completion of a standard curriculum in order to qualify for a synagogue Bar Mitzvah. At the same time we began to see the practice of Bat Mitzvah for girls gradually emerge.

The Hebrew Institute had progressed as an after-school Hebrew educational institution. It occupied a building at Crown and High Streets and later built its facility at Dwight and Legion.

The children of middle income Jewish families often took lessons with private teachers, usually elderly Jews who supported themselves as *rebbes*, and who generally came, after school hours, to the student's home. The child may have also attended synagogue Sunday school or other classes, but many were children from unaffiliated families who still felt the importance of having a Jewish education.

Jewish children generally attended public schools and mixed freely with other children and felt little overt discrimination. Most of the other children were born in America, but of European parentage. There were relatively few blacks in New Haven at the time. The teachers were largely women of Irish descent. Jewish children, even from non-observant families, or even anti-religious parents, stayed out of school on the principal Jewish holidays.

There was little provision for young people to attend High Holiday services, but the holidays were great social events. In the late twenties, even at B'nai Jacob which was then already Conservative, it was the social practice of high school youth to gather on the synagogue steps. Since services were an all-day affair and few people drove cars, they didn't go home during the day, and since there was no air conditioning, it was common practice for worshippers to "come out for air." As a result, together with the young people, there were more souls in front of the synagogues than inside.

Middle income Jews during the period lived largely west of the center of the city starting with Park Street. They populated the area of Howard, Sylvan, and Davenport Avenues, and Vernon, Ward, and Asylum Streets, and also Day Street, Orchard, Gilbert Avenue, and Sherman Avenue. Gradually they moved to Winthrop, Elm, Norton, Ellsworth, the Boulevard, and the Edgewood, Alden, and McKinley Avenue section of Westville; also to Goffe Terrace and adjoining Beaver Hills. The Mishkan Israel membership lived on Orange Street and the adjoining streets. None of these neighborhoods were exclusively Jewish. Since we went to public schools, most of us had close friendships with gentile children as well as Jews. When we had parties, non-Jewish children were included.

At twelve, some of us joined the Boy Scouts, non-sectarian of course, and we were welcomed everywhere, but we had three very strong and active Jewish-sponsored troops. Mishkan Israel's Troop

15 was not restricted to members of the Temple and the YM– and YWHA first had Troop 38, which could not accommodate everyone who wanted to join. So, Troop 62 was formed. These troops had between 32 and 48 boys each who joined at the age of twelve and usually continued activities until fifteen. In signaling both in Morse and semaphore codes, and in knot tying contests, the Jewish troops carried off most awards at city-wide jamborees. All three troops were well represented during the summer at Camp Sequassen, the Boy Scout camp.

Jewish day camps and Camp Laurelwood were not yet established and few of us went to private camps. Bathing was good at Morris Cove, Woodmont, and Silver Sands in Momauguin. Many Jews owned or rented summer cottages at these beaches, and others came out to bath houses. Few mothers then drove cars, but since most didn't work, they would take us to the beach on the open trolley cars. By 1920 most of our fathers already had cars and we looked forward to a visit to the beach on the weekend. Consequently, most Jewish youths were able to swim.

Our parents operated retail clothing, hardware, grocery, jewelry, and drug stores, wholesale fruit and produce businesses, printing plants, sewing, and other small factories. They may also have been custom tailors, doctors, dentists, accountants, and lawyers. Some were engaged in scrap metal, automobile, coal and oil distribution, and dry cleaning. Jewish names were prominent on store fronts throughout the city.

Many parents lived busy social lives. I remember parties at our home, and at homes of my local relatives, where delicious food was served lavishly and usually where musical entertainment was provided. It was common for someone in the group to play the piano and the violin and for someone with a trained voice to sing. Sometimes there were intellectual evenings where Rabbi Louis Greenberg of B'nai Jacob would lead a discussion, or where Isadore Ladin, Harvey's father, would read stories by Sholom Aleichem.

Jews were interested in theater and music. They attended concerts at Woolsey Hall and the Shubert Theater, all out of proportion to their numbers. Also, for one benefit or another, Joseph Drabkin, the printer, would bring Jewish Theater from Second Avenue to the

Shubert. Meyer Sokoloff the musician, and brother of Nikolai Sokoloff, the conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, organized the New Haven Civic Orchestra, supported to a great extent by the local Jewish and Italian communities.

Jewish children took music lessons. Girls studied the piano and boys played the violin. Some played other instruments and some of our young Jews earned spending money while at high school by playing with jazz bands on Saturday nights, and at least four dance bands eventually became nationally known.

As for other entertainment, we Jews were all very proud of the Atlas Club basketball team and it was always a treat to be taken to one of their games.

Many young Jews practiced basketball at the E. B. Foote Club (never having seen the name in print, I hope I have it right) and later, at the Jewish Center. It was the period when Jewish youths were prominent in college basketball.

Occasionally we participated in a program at the YM– and YWHA, the predecessor to the Jewish Center, which was still on Crown Street, between York and High Streets.

Youths were eager to see a new fully equipped home for the "Y," and were happy when the "Y" formulated a plan to extend its Crown Street facilities, but the program never got further than excavating a hole in the ground. Something had gone wrong. They had a fund raising event, where they organized the "Pioneer Club" where a thousand members were each to contribute one hundred dollars a year, but it didn't work and we never got our expanded "Y."

Tennis was an important activity and we saw a whole group of young Jewish tennis players. I don't remember local golfers, and there were only a few accomplished Jewish baseball and football players.

Because of the opportunity available to us with the New Haven Arena, many became ice skaters and here I recall we would have our skating groups that included Jewish and non-Jewish young people and we would skate and socialize together.

As I remember, first only Mishkan Israel had Friday night services, but later, B'nai Jacob also had services with sermons and discussions. Fifty to one hundred Jews regularly attended Friday

night meetings of the Friday Night Club. Their membership considered themselves intellectuals and their meetings consisted of a presentation by a Yale professor, followed by a discussion period. Yale University provided the meeting room in a hall on York Street on the Yale campus and some of the most distinguished of the Yale faculty contributed their time.

The Friday Night Club was unique since in a sense it was encouraged and supported by Yale and it fulfilled a need that Jews had for educational and intellectual development. The club supporters were professionals and business people, some of whom played important roles in the community. Some of the members sat and listened to the presentations, absorbing all the knowledge they could, while others were challenging and became involved in serious discussions and debate. I have warm memories of evenings with stimulating discussions.

There were many Jewish lodges, clubs, and fraternal and benefit organizations. Remember, these were pre-television days. The young people also had their organizations. There was already AZA and the KOJ. At the age of fourteen, I joined the Eclipse Literary Society, an organization that had much history, but from my experience it was more social than literary. It sponsored two dances that I attended. One was held at the Harmonie Club on Whitney Avenue, ant the other at the Twin Oaks Restaurant in North Haven. To one dance I double dated with a sixteen-year-old member who was able to use the family car. For the other dance, one of the girl's parents provided their car and chauffeur.

We who belonged to the Eclipse looked forward to belonging to the Adelphi, an older boys' society. The Adelphi, like the Eclipse, had been established a long time before, but by the time we reached the required age it was no longer active.

The Harmonie Club on Whitney Avenue, a club for affluent Jews, has since ceased to exist. It was, I believe, very much like the Quinnipiac Club.

New Haven had two high schools. One was Commercial High School, which offered secretarial and business courses, and the other was New Haven High School, with Hillhouse and the Boardman Trade School as its two components. Hillhouse was the aca-

demic/classical college preparatory school, serving at that time, all of New Haven, East Haven, Branford, Hamden, West Haven, Orange, Woodbridge, and Milford. Because it was so all-encompassing, we met our contemporaries from the whole area.

It was at Hillhouse that we Jews became extremely competitive. We were more aware than the others that if we wanted to be admitted to colleges of our choice, because of quotas, we had to excel. This meant not only that we needed good marks, but we had to show our involvement in extracurricular activities. As a result, we dominated the boards of the school publications, the debating society, dramatic and language clubs, and we competed for position on the Monitor Squad and the Student Council.

At Hillhouse, a strong fraternity and sorority school, we found ourselves segregated in separate Jewish "Greek Letter Societies." Strangely, we didn't resent it, and we were quite proud to be accepted in our societies and we didn't question why the lines were drawn socially on religious and ethnic lines. Perhaps it pleased our parents, as we were now of dating age, that we would be channeled into socializing with our own people.

Many of us had afternoon jobs since we were out of school at 1:00 PM. I worked at a doctor's office from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. Others clerked at retail stores.

Dating, for those who belonged to fraternities, included dances given by our own fraternity, an opportunity to attend a function or two of the other fraternities, and the possibility of being invited to a sorority dance. There were also functions of the Young Peoples Society of Mishkan Israel. Almost every weekend there were parties at the homes of the girls. We called these parties "rackets." One of us would get the call to bring six or eight of the boys we knew. On occasion, of course, we would invite girls to the movies. In the summer when one of us who was old enough to drive could get his father's car, we might all go to Savin Rock and sometimes take dates along.

Our fraternity dances were formal and we owned our full dress outfits with tail jackets, white vests and opera hats. Tuxedos weren't good enough for seniors. At informal occasions, we dressed with grey buttoned spats over our shoes.

Prohibition was not repealed until my junior year at college. We drank near-beer, but I remember mixing pure alcohol, rye drops, and water and drinking it with ginger ale, but drinking whiskey was not the "in thing." When my parents entertained they usually served wine. Many Jewish households made their own wine, often from home grown grapes. If my father did serve whiskey, it was a small shot of schnapps, never a mixed drink, and usually offered with black bread and herring. Jews were proud that they were not drinkers.

I can't recall any serious discussions about anti-Semitism or about a Jewish homeland in Palestine. We all had in our homes the little white *pushkes* for collecting change for the Jewish National Fund. It wasn't until 1933, when Hitler came into power, that we became aware of the need for Jewish large-scale defense and philanthropy. One Sunday morning I read in the *New York Herald Tribune* about Hitler's election and the editorial comment was frightening.

During the next vacation, while I was home, my father told me that he had been to a "big givers" function. Because of the things happening in Europe, and in response to the request to triple annual contributions, he raised his gift to $75.00, and Sam Schwartz, the largest contributor to Jewish causes, increased his gift from $250 to $750. However, it was not until 1937 that we began to realize the seriousness of the world situation and that we began to feel our responsibility as Jews.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: HERBERT D. SETLOW is currently President of the Jewish Historical Society. He was born in New Haven and has lived all his life in the area, and presently lives in Woodbridge. Until December of 1986 he headed the family work clothes business, Setlowear, Inc., which was headquartered in Orange. In the community he has held a number of presidencies including the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Community Center, the Conn. Regional Board of the Anti-Defamation League, the Conn. Jewish Community Relations Council, and B'nai B'rith ADL, National Council of Jewish Federations, Jewish Welfare Board, and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

So, You Ate At the Algonquin Club!

by Joseph D. Horowitz

A FRIEND OF MINE, upon learning that I had commenced working for the Southern New England Telephone Company, hinted that I'd be lucky if I found another Jew working there. I did not know what he was getting at and made no judgment of the remark at the time. Nor did I did bother to get back to my friend when I soon found there were, in fact, several Jews at work there. I was content to be working for a very good company and was willing to take my chances with them. That I was right is evidenced by the fact that I remained with them for over forty-two years. Many interesting events occurred during those exciting days. Bear with me as I recount some of them.

First, let me take you back to 1926 when a pair of unusual circumstances led to my being hired. I was then twenty-two years old and, as the saying goes, in-between jobs. I had returned to New Haven after a disappointing effort on my part to work and learn Ac-

counting in New York. It was homesickness that brought me back. Even though friends of mine in New York had found employment for me, provided me with living accommodations in their own home and had assisted me in my enrollment at the Washington Square branch of New York University, I gave it all up. As I rode the train back to New Haven I declared that whatever my future might be, I would find it there.

The first of the unusual circumstances occurred when my brother, Kas, in whose electroplating business I had been helping out, asked me to drop by the telephone business office on Court Street to obtain the telephone number and address of a firm in Providence, RI. Seated at her switchboard, off to the right of the office, sat a lone telephone operator. She was there to assist in the placing of all calls—local and toll. Upon securing a desired number she would direct the caller to one of several phone booths lining the wall. Payment was made to the operator following the completion of the call.

I told her I was in need of the telephone number and address of a firm in Providence, RI. She said she would get it for me but that it would take a minute or two. I stood by watching her at work. I was fascinated by her deft handling of the cords, then a part of all switchboards. She was pleasant, she handled her calls efficiently and when she was free, we chatted.

As the time passed, and I had not yet received the information I came for, a sudden thought occurred to me. Why not ask her where one would go if one sought to work for the Telephone Company. I put the question to her. She replied that would depend on where one chose to work. Recalling my mother's longtime wish of wanting me to be an Accountant, and further aware of her disappointment following my withdrawal from New York University, I said, "Accounting."

With that the operator picked up a small directory at her side and began to thumb through it. She finally looked up and said, "There is a Plant Accounting office at 157 Church Street, and the Plant Accountant's name is Julius Kraft." I recognized the address as the newly erected Powell Building at the corner of Court Street and made a note of the name. She followed by giving me the information I had asked for. I thanked her for everything and left.

Several weeks passed before I decided to make my first call on Mr. Kraft. I had become interested in observing court trials and was spending much of my free time attending them. I took in trials in the old City Court behind City Hall as well as the more exciting ones at the County Court building at Church and Elm Streets.

Court had adjourned early one afternoon in February when, standing on the court house steps, I saw the Powell Building but a short distance away. I said to myself, "Why not?" and started across the Green. I entered the building, saw Mr. Kraft's name on the directory board in the lobby and rode the elevator to the sixth floor. Immediately upon exiting I saw his name on a door. I entered and was approached by an office boy. He politely asked who I wanted to see. I told him Mr. Kraft. He asked me to wait and disappeared into an inner office. When he returned he said Mr. Kraft would see me.

Mr. Kraft was seated at his desk. He motioned me to take a chair which faced him. I judged him to be about fifty, of medium build, and wiry. He wore somewhat thick-lensed glasses and in his hand held a cigar which I recognized as a Connecticut shade-grown Osterweis. I knew because I had taken to smoking cigars myself. Mr. Kraft was pleasant and I immediately felt at ease in his presence. In answer to his question as to what he could do for me, I introduced myself and said that I would very much like to work for the Telephone Company. Looking me straight in the eye he replied, "Why do you want to work for the Telephone Company?" I told him that I knew it was a very good company and that I had long had an interest in accounting. I added that if I did go to work for the Telephone Company it was my intention to enroll in a course of Accounting. We talked about several other things, all of which came to an end when Mr. Kraft said he was sorry but that he had no opening at the present time. Needless to say, I was disappointed but thanked him for his time and left.

And now the second of the unusual circumstances, which led to my working for SNET, was about to occur. As I left Mr. Kraft's office the office boy who had greeted me asked how I had made out. When I told him that I had been told there was no opening he came close and in a conspiratorial manner whispered, "Come back next week." I thanked him and went out.

Exactly one week later I paid another visit to Mr. Kraft. Again I was told by the office boy to wait. When I later entered Mr. Kraft's office he greeted me cordially, drew on his cigar and again motioned me to take a seat. He showed no signs of being surprised that I had returned. I started by saying that I hoped there was now the possibility of an opening in his department. Again he asked me, "Why do you want to work for the Telephone Company?" I gave him the same reasons I had given before but this time added a little about my personal life, and for good measure, told him that my brother, Kas, had graduated from Yale in the Class of 1918. Once more he replied that he had no opening and, after thanking him for his time, I left.

Again the office boy was waiting for me and asked how I had made out. When I told him there was still no opening he once more surprised me when he said, "Come back next week." I felt I had to know his name and asked him. He replied that it was 'George Smith' and then asked, "Don't you live on Clark Street?" When I replied that I did, he said he lived just a few doors away from me. I now knew I had seen him before. As I was leaving he again urged me to return the following week.

I returned that following week and the week after that, all with the same result. Mr. Kraft would ask why I wanted to work for the Telephone Company and, after hearing my reasons, would say he had no opening. And George Smith would, each time, tell me to return.

On Wednesday, March 17, 1926, I called on Mr. Kraft's office for the fifth straight week. I was ushered into his office after the usual preliminaries by the office boy. Mr. Kraft was seated behind his desk drawing on his ever-present cigar. I thought I detected a smile on his face. I was expecting to hear his now familiar "why do you want to work for the Telephone Company?" when he said he had good news for me. "I have succumbed to your persistence," I heard him say, "I really think you want to work for the Telephone Company." He went on to say there was the small matter of a physical examination and if I passed that I could report for work in the morning at eight o'clock. I almost could not believe what I was hearing. After five weeks of calling I had convinced him that I really wanted to work for SNET. I mumbled my thanks, shook his hand and said something about his not being sorry. On the way out I gave George

Smith the good news and thanked him for encouraging me to return each week. All he said was, "I'll be seeing you around."

As I hastened to the doctor's office for my exam I asked myself for the first time, what is a Plant Accountant, and what is Plant Accounting all about. No one had volunteered the information and I had never asked.

I passed my physical with ease and rushed home to tell my family my wonderful news. They were delighted and especially pleased that I was going to work for such a prestigious firm as Southern New England Telephone. My mother was most pleased of all. The thing she liked best, I gathered, was that when the time came for me to retire I would receive a fine pension and thus not have to worry about money when I got old. I gave that little thought at the time but must confess that my mother was right, as mothers always are. I am, indeed, presently enjoying my pension.

Another thing that pleased my mother was my telling her that I now planned to pursue a course in Accounting. This I did the following September when I enrolled in the local branch of Northeastern University for a four-year evening course which would lead to my degree in Accounting. Classes were held at the YMCA at the corner of Chapel and Howe Streets. When Northeastern made its decision to close its New Haven branch two years later, community-minded citizens, together with Yale, founded New Haven College as Northeastern's replacement. Classes were thereafter held in Winchester Hall on lower Prospect Street. With the change, I had the distinction of being a member of the first graduating class of New Haven College—now the University of New Haven.

When I reported for work that first morning, Mr. Kraft took me into the large office which housed the entire Plant Accounting operation. It occupied the entire 6th floor of the Powell Building. I estimated there were about sixty people at work. I was introduced to Goodwin "Goodie" Wolff with whom I would be working. He turned out to be one of the brightest young Jewish men I had ever met. I felt most fortunate to have him as the one who would be breaking me into the mysteries of Plant Accounting. His explanation of what I would be doing was clear, as was his explanation of where Plant Accounting fitted into the entire scheme of the telephone business. I

could not help but think back to the day when I met the unknown telephone operator in the business office. Was she the one who had actually guided my footsteps to this very office?

Goodie took time to explain that the telephone business (at the time) comprised three major divisions—Commercial, Traffic, and Plant. Commercial took in the operation of all business offices, the selling of telephone equipment, and the billing and the collecting of all charges. Traffic involved the transmission of all telephone calls together with the operators who handled these calls. Plant took care of the laying of cable, erecting of poles, stringing of wire and the installation of telephone equipment. I was part of Plant.

My job involved the following: when the adding of new Plant was contemplated, such as running a new cable between New Haven and Cheshire, an estimate of the cost of the job was prepared by engineers. Each foot of cable, each pole, all trimmings and the estimated labor hours went into a projected overall cost of the job. If, upon completion, the actual cost of the job exceeded the estimate by ten percent or more, it was my job to find out why. To do this I had to contact engineers, construction foremen and supply clerks. As a result I made many new friends throughout the state. Most frequently a change in plans after a job got started or the encountering of unforeseen obstacles led to overruns.

That first morning Goodie took time to introduce me to my coworkers. Three were Jews. One was Gilbert Muhlfelder. I recognized the name as being that of a prominent family in New Haven. The others were Miriam Jacques and "Buddy" Semack—she of athletic fame and admired by all. I had already learned that Mr. Kraft was Jewish and that he had a brother, Herrmann, who also worked for the Company, holding the position of Supervisor of Methods. And I knew Goodie was Jewish.

While I wasn't exactly keeping a count of Jews working there, I could not help but become aware that others were to be found in the Company. Friends volunteered that a Meyer Schwartz was employed as a draftsman in the Plant Department. Still later I learned of the presence of three Jews, all engineers, working in what I considered the most important part of the business. Later I met them. They were Lew Lackman, John Mermin and Ben Finman. At an inter-

departmental meeting several months later I met Gert Kelman, a resident of Wallingford. Gert was the life of every meeting and party she attended. She maintained her popularity with coworkers and Management until her retirement many years later.

I had been on the job less than a month when an incident occurred which proved what a regular guy Julius Kraft was. The popular rain gear of the day was a yellow oil slicker. Nearly every young man wore one. A fad at the time was to draw some kind of picture on the back of one's slicker.

My drawing was that of something dear to the hearts of all poker players, a hand holding a royal flush—the ten, jack, queen, king, and ace of spades. My drawing was neatly executed and had attracted considerable attention everywhere. As soon as I had been hired I knew I had better buy myself a new raincoat—that my present one would hold no favor with Mr. Kraft. It was not in keeping with the image of the Company.

I kept putting off my purchase. One morning I awoke to rain and had no choice but to wear my slicker to work. I hoped I could elude Mr. Kraft long enough for me to go out and buy a new raincoat after work. I wore it in that morning without being detected. My luck ran out as I was leaving for the day. I stood with a group awaiting the descending elevator. Just as it reached our floor Mr. Kraft left his office and took his place beside me. We were the last to enter the elevator. I stood with my face against the elevator doors, Mr. Kraft directly behind me. Several of my coworkers made appropriate wisecracks about my drawing; Mr. Kraft said not a word.

As I anticipated, I was summoned to Mr. Kraft's office the next morning. He said that was a fine drawing on the back of my raincoat but the Telephone Company was hardly the place to wear it. I told him I agreed—that I had not gotten around to buying a new raincoat but would certainly do so as soon as I got out of work. As I was leaving, Mr. Kraft said, "In all the years that I have been playing poker I never once held a royal flush."

There might have been two additional Jews in the Company had they decided to stay. Mr. Kraft had hired Al Fredericks, a native of Wallingford, who, after working for only a few months, left to start his own accounting firm in his home town. Also hired was

Morris Gamm, who, after an even shorter period, left to enter the retail clothing business.

That summer another young Jewish man came to work in Plant Accounting. He was Harry Sohcot, a law student. Harry spent the summer with us and went on to become a respected attorney with a practice in New Haven.

I had completed my first year in Plant Accounting when Company officials announced a new hiring policy. Employment offices would be established in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport. Heretofore, all hiring had been done by departmental heads like Mr. Kraft.

As a guide to future hiring the Company decided to administer an IQ test to its present employees. Consternation struck everywhere as employees thought of losing their jobs. All were assured that test results would have no effect on present job holders. A date was set for the test to be given in Plant Accounting.

That day came and we all took the test. Results would be announced in several weeks. When the test results were posted, under the category of "Super Excellent" were the names of Goodwin Wolff, Gilbert Muhlfelder, and Joseph Horowitz. We were congratulated by all our coworkers. Mr. Kraft could not let the scores go unnoticed. He called the three of us into his office, congratulated us on our showing and the credit it brought to our office, and proudly announced that starting next week we would each receive a $1.00 raise. For me, it meant that now I would be making $19.00 a week.

Some time later I was informed that elections would soon be held in Plant Accounting to choose a representative to the Company's Employees Council. The Employees Council, I was told, was something like a union where employees' representatives would meet with the Company management people to make known any grievances they might have. Election day came and I found, to my great surprise, that my fellow-workers had elected me to represent them.

One day, I received word that the annual Spring Employees Council Conference would be held at the famous Norfolk Inn in that lovely town in northwestern Connecticut. The prospect of going there excited me. I had always wanted to see the wondrous scenery that Connecticut had to offer. I set about learning of my coworkers'





Herrmann (on left) and Julius Kraft, probably the first Jews to work for the Southern New England Telephone Company. (COURTESY OF JEANNE KRAFT ALTERMAN)



Joseph Horowitz (far right) attending the SNET Council Conference in Norfolk in 1929 as a representative of the Directory Department. (COURTESY OF JOSEPH D. HOROWITZ)

grievances. All I could find out was that the paper clips were too brittle and the toilet paper in the ladies' room too harsh. Armed with this startling information I headed for Norfolk.

Upon my arrival I found the Inn to be an ancient, three story wood structure with a certain charm dating back to its construction in the late eighties. After registering, I followed a bellhop up three flights of rickety stairs to my room. While he went about opening windows and otherwise being busy, I noticed a strange object coiled in a corner next to my bed. I quickly asked the bellhop what it was. He said with a smile, "Oh, that's your fire escape. In case of fire, just throw it out and climb down." It was a knotted rope. Fortunately, I had no occasion to use it.

Upon learning of more momentous problems facing the Company, I decided not to bring up the matter of the paper clips and harsh toilet paper. I doubted if my constituents much cared.

I was seated at my desk one day reading a copy of SNET's weekly release, the *Telephone Times*, when I caught sight of an article describing the formation of a new group within the Company. This group would sell Yellow Pages advertising. Heretofore, the article continued, Yellow Pages advertising had been sold by the Reuben H. Donnelley Corp. of New York, by agreement with Southern New England Telephone. Because of the repeated complaints by Connecticut businessmen of the treatment accorded them by these visitors from New York, who worked strictly on commission, SNET had decided to establish its own sales force to be made up mostly of present employees.

I read the article with increasing interest. I was aware of the presence of the Yellow Pages in the back of the telephone directory, having used them to advantage on several occasions. From the first, I had been convinced they could be of benefit to those who advertised there. The article further stated that the head of the new department was William A. James, a Yale graduate most recently associated with several leading publications in New York.

I had never given any thought to the possibility of my some day leaving Plant Accounting. I was happy in my work and felt that advancement would one day come my way. Yet the appeal to join the new group, generated by what I was reading, became too strong for

me to resist. Mr. Kraft had taken early retirement because of his eyes and with his departure I no longer felt any personal ties that bound me to Plant Accounting. I decided I would make a call on Mr. James, just as I had done on Mr. Kraft, two years earlier.

Mr. James' office, I learned, was in the Merrill–Whitfield Building at 205 Orange Street. I called the next morning and was told I could come right over. Mr. James was a large friendly sort with a mop of red hair and a matching mustache. I judged him to be in his early forties. I could not help but feel that he looked very much like a "Yalie." He stood as I entered, shook my hand and asked me to take a seat.

I introduced myself. I told him that I read the article describing the formation of his new department and felt very much that I would like to be a part of it. I emphasized that I had used the Yellow Pages frequently and had a strong conviction that they could help the businessman. He seemed pleased upon hearing this. I told him that although I was happy in my present job in Plant Accounting, something about selling Yellow Pages advertising had an even greater appeal to me. I told him I was 24 years old, that I had been with SNET for two years, and, for good measure, as I had done with Mr. Kraft, that my brother was a graduate of Yale in the Class of 1918. I felt sure this might help because I had once heard the expression, "Once a Yale man, always a Yale man." Whether that expression applied in this case, I did not know. All I did know was that it sounded like a good idea to use it then.

Once we were through talking, Mr. James said that he was glad that I had come to see him but that he was sorry. His sales staff was now complete. He added that under other circumstances he would have been glad to hire me. Maybe another time when an opening occurred. I thanked him for his time, hid my disappointment, and headed for the door.

My hand was on the doorknob when he suddenly called out and asked me to return. As if with relief, he said that everyone on his sales staff had been selected for him by others. This would be his first opportunity to hire someone himself. He told me that he was impressed with what I had said about the Yellow Pages, admired me for coming over to seek the job, and, if my boss was willing to let me

go, he would take me on. My elation knew no bounds. There was no question about my boss letting me go, I knew. I was now about to get out from behind a desk and attain my wish of traveling around this beautiful state of ours. I had a taste of it when I had gone to Norfolk. I wanted to see more. No thought had been given by either Mr. James or myself as to whether I would make a good salesman. My only previous sales experience had been in convincing housewives that they should have their stove parts electroplated while I was helping my brother. Yet, something about my enthusiasm for the Yellow Pages must have convinced Mr. James that I could do the job. It is possible, too, that he saw more promise in me than he did in some of his present salesmen, a few of whom had been exiled by other departments in the business. The most exciting part of my long tenure with Southern New England Telephone was about to begin.

I saw my boss the next morning and requested a transfer to the newly organized group that would be selling Yellow Pages advertising. As I expected, he said he would have liked for me to stay on in Plant Accounting but would not stand in my way if I wanted to leave. When I called Mr. James and told him I was available he asked me to report to him in two weeks.

On Monday, April 9, 1928 I reported. After telling me how glad he was to see me, Mr. James said he was sending me to work in Bridgeport with a salesman already there named Willard "Bill" Wiesener. Bill had tried to work Bridgeport alone but that had proven too much for him. I found him waiting for me in the business office where he had been employed before transferring to Yellow Pages. Bill was pleasant and I knew we would work well together. He suggested that we divide the city in half; he would take the south side, I the north. That was fine with me as the north end included the large Jewish area adjoining Madison Avenue. I knew that I would feel comfortable there.

Bill spent some time with me explaining rates, contracts and rules governing copy. The latter interested me greatly. I had always been good at drawing things and was excited over the prospect of one day seeing an ad I had drawn appear in the telephone directory. I grew excited, too, over the prospect of being creative. Already ideas began to pop into my mind of the ads I would sell.

As Bill was about to make his calls, a sudden idea struck him. Perhaps I should accompany him to see how it was all done. That sounded like a good idea to me. The day turned out to be an enjoyable one. Observing Bill was all I needed to know that I would be all right when I struck out on my own in the morning.

To prepare myself for the calls I would make, I took my assignment home. I selected those accounts I planned to call on and ran through a sales presentation for each. I knew how important it was for me to make good. I had sought the job; now I would have to prove I could do it. I went to bed all excited over the great, new adventure which awaited me as a Yellow Pages salesman.

As I expected, I encountered no difficulty approaching and talking to owners of plants and stores. The medium was still in its infancy and required a considerable amount of persuasion to convince a businessman that people would look in the Yellow Pages when in need of a product or service.

Before long I became aware that some businessmen refused to talk with me. I correctly sensed they thought I was from Donnelley. On one occasion a laundry owner grabbed me by my coat collar and propelled me to the door. I called out, "I'm not from Donnelley; I'm from the Telephone Company." When these words sank in he released his grip on me, apologized, and led me to his office, where he bought a large ad. He related how for years Donnelley men, fearing a loss of commission, ignored his pleas to reduce the size of his ad.

When the Bridgeport directory closed in June, sales were added up. I had done very well indeed, for a new man. As a matter of fact, my sales for the three months I had worked, exceeded those of a number of salesmen who had worked for an entire six months. I received a call from Mr. James asking that I see him in the morning. When I arrived he greeted me warmly and expressed his thanks for my excellent showing. He got right to the point. He asked how much I was presently making. When I replied $22 a week, he said, "Starting next week you will be getting $44 a week." I couldn't believe my ears. To have my salary doubled in so short a time. I thanked him and told him I would keep up the good work. I had no doubt I would do so.

My next assignment was New Haven, followed by Hartford, Bristol, and Stamford. When the figures were in for the year I was again one of the top producers, even though I had worked only nine months in Yellow Pages. At the annual sales meeting in January, Company officials came over to congratulate me on my excellent showing. Mr. James again said he wanted to see me in his office in the morning.

When I entered his office he congratulated me and told me of the complimentary things said about me by the Company officers. As he did the previous June, he got right to the point. He asked how much I was presently making. I replied $44 a week. With that he said that starting the following week I would be making $66 a week. Again I could not believe my ears. To have gone from $22 a week to $66 a week in less than a year was incredible. I thanked him and again assured him that I would keep up the good work. I couldn't wait to reach hone to tell my family this wonderful news.

Frequently my work assignments took me to distant points necessitating overnight stays.Upon learning that I was attending night classes, in pursuit of my accounting degree, Mr. James said I was free to return home on those nights when classes were held. He did not want me to miss a single class. This I did until I graduated.

Four years after coming to SNET my boss, Bill James, left the Company. No explanation was offered for his departure. I felt that I had lost not only a good boss but a good friend. His departure saddened me deeply. His successor was a young man acknowledged to be a member of the "Inner Sanctum," meaning that he was headed for great things. This was evidenced by the fact that he had neither directory nor sales experience. His job prior to coming to Directory was as a Business Office Manager.

My new boss was very much unlike his predecessor. Salesmen in the field heard little from him while successful sales canvasses went unnoticed. It was rare that we saw or heard from him.

About this time an incident took place which left me puzzled to this day. It began when I was given a special assignment. My boss called me in to tell me I was to call on all full-page advertisers and tell them that their present ads would have to be reduced to a half-

page. This was to comply with an edict issued by AT&T following word from Washington of a national paper shortage.

I was concerned over my new assignment. There was something about it I did not like. It was the loss of revenue generated by the enforced reduction of the full-page ads. For SNET, it would mean a loss of $25,000 in annual revenues. I came up with a plan that would enable us to comply with AT&T's request and yet not lose money.

I took my plan to my boss the next morning. It called for offering each full-page advertiser an opportunity to buy two half-page ads under two different classified headings, without an increase in cost. I knew 'without an increase in cost' would appeal to the advertisers. True, there could be no saving of paper, but on the other hand, neither would there be any loss of revenue.

At first my boss did not take kindly to the idea. Being new, he wanted to do what AT&T requested. On the other hand, retaining $25,000 in revenue was too hard to resist. He complimented me on my idea and told me to go ahead.

There were forty full-page ads throughout Connecticut. It took me six weeks to see them all. Of the forty, thirty-eight accepted my plan and changed to two ads under two different headings. My goal was to convert all forty but I was thwarted by the fact that two advertisers were funeral homes.They had no other heading to go under.

AT&T had been kept apprised of my plan and the success I was having with it. They offered no objection. I was to learn later that they unofficially sanctioned its use elsewhere.

My boss obviously felt compelled to thank me for my outstanding job and called me into his office. He congratulated me on what I had done and on how brilliant my plan had been. Most of all he talked about the revenues that had been saved, previously given up as lost. I thanked him for his kind words.

I was about to leave when he said he had another matter he wished to discuss with me. That was the matter of my future with SNET. He said he felt he ought to tell me that there was not too much I could look forward to. He said I was not to hold my hopes for advancement in the Company too high. I thanked him out of politeness and walked out of his office.

To this day I have been unable to satisfy myself as to why he said all this to me. Was he really a good guy trying to tell me something I should know because of my race or was he an anti-Semite? I chose to let the whole thing drop. Knowing the telephone business, I knew he might not be my boss long—that another advancement was bound to come his way. I did not have to wait long. In a matter of months he was gone. My next boss was the one who put me on the road to my first management level appointment.

Since Bridgeport was my home base I kept returning there for many years. Each succeeding visit brought me closer to my Jewish customers. All remained impressed that a Jew worked for the Telephone Company. They knew of no others employed locally. Sometimes, after they exclaimed how unusual it was for the Telephone Company to hire a Jew, I would further amaze them by saying, "Wait, that's not all, I even ate at the Algonquin Club!" This positively floored them. One merchant, with a tear in his voice and a faraway look, exclaimed, "So you ate at the Algonquin Club!" Yes, Ivan Harney, manager of the Bridgeport business office, had invited several of us to lunch at this exclusive gentile club.

Over the years I had a number of interesting experiences involving my Jewish customers. One, a hardware store owner, had bought an ad from me featuring Pittsburgh Paint which he was authorized to carry. When calling on him the following year for a renewal, he reluctantly admitted to getting very good results. When the new telephone directory appeared, it carried a second ad for a Pittsburgh Paint dealer—this for another hardware store run by a Jewish merchant clear across town. My customer wasted little time in calling me.

One glance in the directory had told me what was wrong. Upon entering his store I was treated coldly. He accused me of having sold his competitor an ad only after I had been told of his excellent results. I explained that I had nothing to do with the sale of the second ad—that it had been sold by another salesman covering that territory. I went on to say that all authorized Pittsburgh Paint dealers could advertise in the Yellow Pages; that no single one had an exclusive right to it. All this fell on deaf ears. He turned and walked away from me. But that was not the end of his displeasure.

From that time on, whenever a Yellow Pages salesman called on this merchant he was greeted with, "Is that SOB Horowitz still working for the Telephone Company?" Many of them, in later years, were men I had trained. Upon hearing this attack on my character they felt I should be called and told. I thanked them for their interest. I kept laughing the whole thing off.

One day my brother, Kas, who had followed me into the Company after disposing of his electroplating business, and who was now selling Yellow Pages advertising, called on this same customer. Apparently, when my brother introduced himself, the merchant failed to catch his name. When the interview had concluded the customer turned to my brother and asked, "Is that SOB Horowitz still with the Telephone Company?" My brother later related how he turned to the customer and heatedly replied, "Apparently you did not catch my name when I came in. It is Horowitz and you are talking about my brother. No one has ever referred to him that way." The customer retreated without another word.

It was now 1963 and thirty-five years had passed since this incident occurred. As Sales Training Manager I sat on a panel of three interviewing candidates for the position of Yellow Pages salesman. I had finished talking with one of the candidates when he asked me if he might tell me of an experience he recently had. He said that after he left the company's employment office the previous week he had decided to visit friends in Boston. His mode of travel was to hitch a ride.

Shortly after he was picked up in the vicinity of the West Rock Tunnel, the driver, a pleasant Jewish man, asked what the young man did for a living. He replied that he had just left the Telephone Company employment office and was scheduled for an interview as a Yellow Pages salesman. The driver turned to him and said, "If you do get the job the chances are that you'll meet an SOB named Horowitz." And they say elephants never forget!

Then there were the Brown brothers, Louis, Morris, and Al, all in the upholstery business. At one time they were in business together; now each ran his own business. Each operated under the name of Brown Bros. and each maintained a lovely showroom on Main Street. None of the brothers spoke to any other. It was my job

to call on all of them about their Yellow Pages advertising and keep them happy. Every time I called they all made the same request—that their ad appear first under the classified heading of Upholsterers.

With each I explained the Company's rules on alphabetizing. Names are listed in alphabetical order. Where the names are exactly the same, listings appear by street address—the lowest number first. Accordingly, Morris came first because his store had the lowest number on Main Street, followed by Louis and lastly, Al, who had the highest number.

All chose to disregard my explanation. Louis said he should come first because he was the oldest of the three brothers. Morris said he should be first because he was the first to carry a large ad—even though he came first anyway because of our alphabetizing rules. Al, the youngest brother, said he should come first because alphabetically, Al came ahead of Louis and Morris.

I liked Al. I knew that each time I called on him he would advance his theories for appearing first despite the fact that his address on Main Street marked him as being doomed to appear last. Al would always try to "con" me. He would say that I knew a way that would place his ad above that of his brothers. I waited for him to ask me again. I said, "Al, I have given your problem much thought. I believe I have a solution that should place your ad first." His eyes brightened. I said, "Have you ever thought of moving to Lafayette Street?" It took him a while to figure that out and when he did he let out a loud laugh. That was what made calling on the Brown brothers so pleasant.

Because of an increase in circulation, advertisers in the Bridgeport directory received a moderate rate increase. A $5 a month ad would now cost $6 a month.One of my customers was a glazier who, after I told him of the increase, walked away from me without saying a word. On repeated calls that I made the glazier disappeared into a back room as soon as he saw me. As I neared the end of my stay in Bridgeport I had yet to obtain his signature on a renewal contract.

One day I found a young lady in the store. She said she was the glazier's daughter, home from school for the summer. I told her of the problem I was having with her father. She said she fully understood. Her father was an avowed Communist and thus opposed to

all rate increases. My explanation that our rate increase was based on an increased circulation, thus of greater benefit to her father, fell on deaf ears. I asked if I might leave a contract with her should he change his mind. She doubted that he would but took it. I knew that glaziers acknowledged that a considerable part of their business came through the Yellow Pages. I thought that this glazier might forego some of his Communistic beliefs in favor of business.

On my final day in Bridgeport I dropped by for what would be the last time. Unsmiling, the daughter handed me a signed contract. She said it had taken some doing, on the part of her hard-lined Communist father, to sign. I thanked her and left, feeling strongly that she shared her father's beliefs.

Someone asked me one day which of my sales took the longest to make. I quickly recalled a kosher poultry market on Madison Avenue. My boss had remarked that not a single poultry dealer in all Connecticut carried an ad under the heading of Poultry Markets. I took that as a personal challenge and decided to call on this particular poultry market the next day. As I anticipated, the market owner was far from interested. All his business, he claimed, came from within the neighborhood. Besides, he had been there for years and everyone knew him. But I pressed on; I was determined to make a sale.

As I kept talking customers came and went. While he worked, I kept talking. Several customers seemed interested in what I was saying. For some it might have been the very first sales presentation they had ever heard. I even thought that some were saying to themselves, "I wish my Sammy could sell like that." Some even got into the act. One told him to buy whatever it was I was selling as he had enough money. Another, speaking in Yiddish, said, "So buy already, he is such a nice, young man and working so hard." I understood every word she said. At last the market owner said to go ahead and put in an ad—but only a small one. Had he bowed to the will of his customers or was it my marathon sales presentation that had sold him? I walked out with an order for a half-inch ad after two and one-half hours. But it was worth it; we now had our first ad under Poultry Markets.



Alfred W. Van Sinderen (later to become president) of SNET presenting Joseph Horowitz with a service award in 1951. (COURTESY OF JOSEPH D. HOROWITZ)

I am reminded of a call I made years later when I was Sales Training Manager. I had accompanied a trainee to South Norwalk to observe his first calls. A small furniture store, which had never bought before, was selected for the first call. This would give the trainee an opportunity to talk and make use of the sales techniques which had been given him. Whether he made a sale or not was of no consequence; his call was primarily for the purpose of gaining experience.

Upon entering the store we were confronted by a friendly Jewish woman who said she was the owner. The trainee quickly launched into his sales presentation using everything that had been taught him. I stood by, pleased with his performance.The trainee ran out of ammunition and did the only thing left for him. He asked for the order.

To his surprise, and mine, the customer said she would take a small ad. The trainee, flushed with success, prepared the contract and handed it to the customer for her signature. As she was signing, she looked up at the trainee and said, "You want to know why I bought an ad? You caught me in a 'goot moot.'" We thanked her for the order and left—also in a 'goot moot'.

In the early sixties I was sitting as a member of a panel interviewing applicants for the job of Yellow Pages salesman. I was pleased to note, one day, that a Jerry Pearlman was to appear. He would be the first Jew to apply in the many years I had been in Directory. I made up my mind I would hire him no matter what. Maybe I felt it was time for a Jew to be on our sales force. As it turned out, I had nothing to fear. Jerry was passed unanimously by the panel. He did well in my classroom and excelled in the field. Jerry seemed to follow in my footsteps. He later became a Training Instructor, then a Sales Manager, and finally, Directory Sales Training Manager.

I waited for a second Jewish applicant to make an appearance. A year later, one did. His name was Ronald White. My mind had already been made up that I would pass him, too. I wondered if perhaps, like me, Julius Kraft had felt proud to have brought Jews into the telephone business. As with Jerry, I did not have to worry about Ron. He was passed by the panel, trained, and also excelled in the field. At the time of his retirement he held the position of Directory Promotion Manager.

Before long still another Jewish applicant appeared. He was Lawrence Garfinkle, a bright, friendly young man just out of service. Immediately liked by all who met him, he became one of our most popular salesmen in our expanding sales force. After two years of selling, Larry saw a notice posted for an opening in SNET's rates department. He applied for the job and was quickly accepted. His work there was so outstanding that he came to the attention of AT&T, always on the lookout for bright minds in associated companies. Larry soon joined AT&T where today he is a Vice President in charge of rate setting.

I had made a good friend at AT&T. He was Don Carvell, who headed up AT&T's sales training section. Don was responsible for developing training outlines and visual aids to be used by the associated companies throughout the country. Don had long been aware of my excellent training record at SNET and frequently invited me to New York. He listened to ideas I presented and used many of them in his releases. He would also try out ideas of his own on me before putting them into print. Ours was a warm and friendly relationship.

Don was always seeking the very best for me. He called my boss one day and said I was needed to help introduce new material at a two-week conference to be held in Denver. Normally I would have been assigned to the eastern session slated for Philadelphia. My boss never refused Don and so I was headed for Denver. My trip there was a treat. Together with my colleagues, I saw the Rockies, Pike's Peak, Aspen and the newly opened Air Force Academy.

On another occasion, Don called to say that he had my boss' permission for me to attend a training manager's conference in Indianapolis. He added that there I would meet a nice, young Jewish man named Irving Cedarbaum, who worked for the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company. He told me to be sure to look him up. I found him, on my arrival, at the get acquainted cocktail party which precedes all conferences. We were pleased to meet each other and spent considerable time together talking.

I did not see Irv for breakfast the next morning but at noon we walked into the hotel dining room together for lunch. We took seats opposite each other. Presently colleagues filled our table set for ten. As I sat chatting with the others, I saw Irv reach into his pocket.

From it he nonchalantly withdrew a yarmulke and put it on his head. He turned to those nearest to him and said, "This is not a beanie. It is a yarmulke which I wear because of my religious beliefs." With that he continued his conversation with all around him.

I could not help but recall that day back in 1926 when the question was raised whether I would find another Jew working for the Telephone Company.I thought,"Boy, have we come a long way!"

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Editor's Note: *Max Adler, of Strouse, Adler Corset Company fame, was a member of the Board of Directors of SNET from 1902—1916. The Kraft brothers, Herrmann and Julius, were with the telephone company from the very early days, Julius, the younger, started in 1904 (the same year, incidentally, that the company bought its first auto, a Bridgeport-made Locomobile), and Herrmann was hired in 1885, just three years after the incorporation of the SNET Company. Herrmann started as a messenger, and later, worked as one of those colorful boy operators, before the advent of women in that role. He rose to the position of Assistant to the General Auditor which he held until his death in 1934. Julius met his future wife, Bessie Bary at the company, and their son, Louis, also worked at SNET for about twenty-five years, reaching the Assistant Vice Presidential level, transferred to AT&T in 1966, and is now retired. Currently Jews can be found in all departments of SNET, including a vice president, Linda D. Hershman.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: JOSEPH D. HOROWITZ is a native of New Haven. Upon joining SNET in 1926 he enrolled in evening classes at the then New Haven College where he received his degree in Accounting. Following retirement from the telephone company after 42 years, he joined the Jewish Home for the Aged as their first Development Director. He remains currently employed there.

In 1936 he married Beatrice Beloff. They are the parents of three children and have three grandchildren. Stories by Joe have appeared in previous editions of Jews in New Haven.



The melamed *at the Bradley Street Shul, Jonathan Rumanoff and his wife, Naomi, in the early 1900s. They were the maternal grandparents of Sara (Sally) Moore Lipwich.* (COURTESY OF SALLY MOORE LIPWICH)

Papa, Mama, and Me

by Sara Moore Lipwich

THE SECOND GREAT WAVE of immigration to our country occurred between 1880–1921. It was also when the greatest number of Jews entered the United States, fleeing from religious persecution and economic insecurity to a haven of peace and a land of opportunity. My parents, Oscar and Bella Moore, arrived during that period.

I can best express the feelings of those newcomers on seeing the "Lady in the Harbor" with the following words:

> Oh Beautiful, first to be seen
> When immigrants neared land,
> A symbol of a better life,
> Freedom upon a stand.
> How thankful are the ones who came,
> Their dreams to be fulfilled,
> America did welcome them,
> They helped our country build.

Papa came first, around 1904 or 1905. He was greeted at Ellis Island by a cousin from New Haven, an Americanized Yalie, who immediately changed papa's name from 'Mauraufchick' to 'Moore.'

As soon as papa was able, he sent for mama who came with their baby daughter and possibly, her parents. They all settled in a rat-infested railroad flat of a tenement building on Franklin Street. The outside toilets were shared with other families. A peanut factory was in the rear. Three more children were born there, one of whom died in infancy.

Mama dreamed of, and hoped for a better home of her own, close to schools, synagogue, shopping and near the downtown Green. Somehow, by 1912, my parents saved enough money to buy a house at 64 William Street, situated just where mama wished. I quote from mama's writings, she wanted "a little grass with some trees and flowers." Possibly this was because mama came from a small farm, surrounded by woods, in Salominka, Russia. When mama's dream came true, she wrote, "Now we have our own home and joy. Thank G-d." That same year, on September 28, 1912 papa became a naturalized citizen.

My earliest memory of William Street is of houses with large lawns, trees lining the unpaved streets, no fences, much greenery, and everything pervaded by a sense of quietude. I can still smell the fragrance of the honeysuckle climbing over the back porch, which I picked and savored as I went out into the yard to play. That's where we had the two big pear trees, the peach tree, and the large grapevine which made a central arbor to enjoy. Other trees and bushes formed the side boundaries, and a good-sized berry tree in front completed nature's panorama.

The youngest child of the family, my only living sibling, Shirley, was born on William Street. In those days most babies were delivered at home. Mama was properly set up in the largest room in the house. It was a newly built brick structure added to the back of the house. The birth was difficult and lengthy. My older sister, Ida, and I watched tensely, standing at the front hall banister, out of earshot. It seemed an eternity as we waited mutely while mama struggled with nature. Finally, a perfect baby girl was born, and mama was especially happy because the event occurred on *Shabbos Shuva*.

My maternal grandparents, Jonathan and Naomi Rumanoff, lived with us. Grandma had Parkinson's disease and my first image of her was sitting in her armchair, hands practically closed and fingers

trembling. Not much later she became bedridden, and quite immobile. My job was to feed her the teaspoon of baking soda and water to ease her indigestion. When her disability became too difficult to handle at home, she entered the Jewish Home for the Aged with grandpa, who helped with her care. She died there in 1924.

Grandpa peddled rolls and bread, purchased from Allinson's Bakery on Grand Avenue, from a pushcart. At day's end the pushcart was parked in our backyard. It was a poor and lowly living for a man who had the brain of an engineer, and the mind of a scholar. The misery of his life was somewhat eased by his immersion in the study of the Gemara and by his life in the shul. My picture of him is poring over the big, black book, a gentle and quiet man. In our shul, Congregation Mogen David on Bradley Street, close to our home, he was the shofar blower and *melamed* among other things.

When he joined grandma in the Jewish Home he continued his learning and taught the Mishna. He lived by himself after grandma's death, but when he became ill he stayed at our home on William Street and died there in 1929, five years after grandma.

Both my parents' families settled in New Haven. Papa's mother died in Russia, and Grandpa Moore lived in Westville with one of his daughters. I remember him as a strong and virile gentleman with a long white beard, who used to walk briskly with his cane. Even in winters' snows he came all the way from Westville to the Grand Avenue area to visit us. Papa said that his father had a special incantation that helped children in convulsions. I was too young to question him scientifically. Unfortunately, after a successful operation, but without antibiotics in those days, he developed pneumonia and died in the hospital in 1928.

Papa also started out as a peddler, selling dry goods and traveling around the area on a bicycle. His warehouse was the porch off the second floor of our house. I loved going up to his "store," smelling and touching the new sheets and pillow cases, towels and sundry related items. The peddling business was on the installment plan and collections were fifty cents a week. His route included a great part of Fair Haven.

Time being his own, papa became "Mr. Mom," an anachronism at the time, helping mama with the boarders and roomers who lived

with us from the start. They were mostly single people and relatives who chose the location because it was near the factories where they worked. Two big companies were Strouse, Adler on Olive Street and the New Haven Clock Co. on Grand Avenue and Hamilton Street.

Mama was also involved in real estate. From the time she bought our dwelling, she became interested in property, purchasing two pieces that I know of in the early days: 66 William Street next door to our left, one-half of a six family dwelling; the other, a small house on Osborne Street which no longer exists. Papa and *Zeide* owned a house on Walnut Street in 1920.

This is how mama started to be a real estate agent, and to my knowledge, the first woman in New Haven in that capacity. I have a card attesting to the fact that she was a member of the "Real Estate Club of Conn." in 1938. In later years she bought other property, one, in which my sister and I lived, on 163–65 Scranton Street. I was her partner and lived there for twelve years. As a result, I was also able to buy my current home on Anthony Street. The other two-family dwelling she owned was located on 204–06 Winthrop Avenue. She was always fair and honest in her transactions and anyone who gave her a lead got a commission. To this day, I meet people who are grateful for the deals she made, and some who are sorry that they didn't listen to her advice. When she needed clerical help, I was her "lawyer."

As time went on, two rooms were added to the house to make space for the growing family and other roomers. Through the years, there were people from many walks of life who resided there for periods of time; one of them was the grandmother of two of my friends now. Because the roomers had the better quarters, my younger sister, Shirley (*Shvesterul*), and I slept on our front porch for some time. It was an unheated, sun room, but we were covered by a featherbed that probably came from Russia. It was called a *perineh* and was delightfully warm. Sometimes wisps of snow would blow in on the window sill. It was healthy, but getting up necessitated a marathon run to the bathroom to get dressed.

We called our house, "the Elastic House" due to the added rooms and because our parents made room for everything and everybody. Guests were welcomed even if mama had to sleep on a chair or



Oscar and Bella Moore with their children, Sara (baby), Ida, and Reuben, taken at their home on William Street about 1910. (COURTESY OF SARA (SALLY) MOORE LIPWICH)

PHONE COLONY 6281-12

OSCAR MOORE

DEALER IN

DRY AND FANCY GOODS

FURNISHINGS AND JEWELRY

64 WILLIAM STREET NEW HAVEN, CONN.

The REAL ESTATE *Club*

of Connecticut

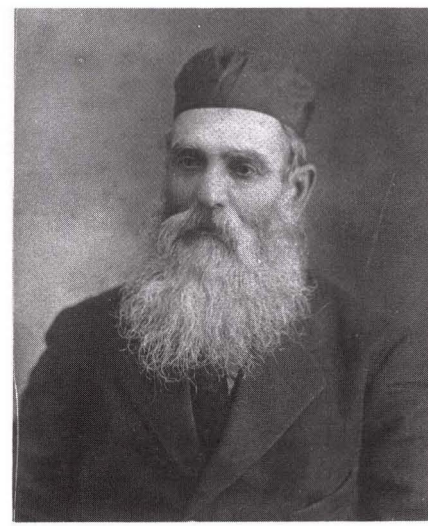
865 Chapel Street New Haven, Conn.

This is to CERTIFY that

Mrs Bella Moore

HAS PROVEN HIMSELF WORTHY AND IS A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING FOR THE MONTH OF June 1938

SEC'Y. PHONE 8-4933 5-7548 PRESIDENT



(Left) Oscar Moore's business card, and Bella Moore's membership card in the Real Estate Club of Connecticut (1938). (Right) Oscar Moore's father, Boaz Mauraufchick (Moore). (COURTESY OF SARA (SALLY) MOORE LIPWICH)

in the bathtub. To this day we have mama's cousins who remember this hospitality when their whole family spent an entire summer with us during the Depression. Compared to their lowly flat in the Bronx, our house was "Palm Springs." Also, when relocating after marriage, we were always welcome during the transition.

Our home was one of complete Orthodoxy and strict adherence to our Judaic faith with emphasis on observance and charity. The dining room table was forever filled with requests for donations, which were usually honored. We were taught how to read Hebrew, and to read and write Yiddish. My allowance came from *davening* on Friday night and *Shabbos* for which I made up tunes for the prayers. Faith in our religion was my parents' sustenance. The observance of the Sabbath and all the Jewish Holidays, brought joy and relief from the hard life of those days. Also, they had to adapt to a new country, soon to be in the throes of the Great Depression. The streets were definitely not "paved with gold."

The High Holidays, which are solemn and reflective, brought many happy memories too. For it was then that we were allowed the luxury of new outfits for *Yontef*. We would parade around in our new finery, going from shul to shul, meeting and greeting our friends with "Happy New Year." Yom Kippur night there were local dances. Mama always wore white on Yom Kippur, a baronet satin skirt and white blouse. All the women in the gallery were in holiday clothes as were the male congregants on the main floor.

The small synagogue, usually referred to as the Bradley Street Shul, was filled to capacity and overflowing, standing room only. We had no regular rabbi, but always during this period, Rabbi Judah Levenberg, the Chief Rabbi in New Haven, would grace our *bima* and deliver a sermon. His oration was so moving that there wasn't a dry eye in the congregation.

Following Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur comes Succoth, the Festival of Booths and of the Harvest. An important feature of our "Elastic House" was our permanent Succah, located between the storage room for Passover paraphernalia and the back porch. The roof was constructed so that it could be pushed open with a long pole-like apparatus which fitted into a contraption on the wall when fully raised, then the trellis with leaves and brush, and nature's sky

came into view. The *esrog* and *lulav* were put there, table and chairs were moved in, and we were ready. That was papa's job.

Then mama took over. The white tablecloth was spread, candles were lit, prayers were said, and a holiday meal was served. Guests, usually relatives, were invariably invited to our table. We all helped. Sometimes when the temperatures were unseasonably low, we ate with our hats and coats on—but into the Succah we did go! When the holiday was over, the pole was lifted out of its niche, and the roof slowly allowed to come down to its place. Thus ended our Jewish Thanksgiving.

All our holidays were strictly observed. I am mentioning only those with special memories, and Passover is another one of them. Right after Purim, "Operation Passover" began. All Passover equipment was kept in a separate, unheated room off the kitchen. It had a small window and doors on either end, but could not be considered anything other than an enclosed storage space. The glassware, which was all around the house, was soaked in the bathtub for at least 24 hours, but the cleaning went on in every nook and cranny of the house. The final job was tying up the silverware (who had extra?) piece by piece on a long string of twine and immersing it in a big pot of boiling water with a large stone at the bottom. Thus they were *kashered.*

As mentioned previously, papa, "Mr. Mom," also helped with the cooking. It was a labor of love, and very rare in those days, for a male to cook. Gefilte fish was his biggest pleasure, and definitely on the Passover menu. Horse radish was grated by hand. I remember the tears flowing! Some of his other favorites were *chulent* (meat and potatoes), *p'char* (calves feet), and *kotletten* (hamburgers). *Chulent* was a *Shabbos* special, cooking on top of the stove all night.

However, mama was still head of Home Economics, including *kashering*, chicken flicking, and cleaning. Very often she did her cooking at night, and at pre-holiday time business abated and she was in the kitchen. Her specialties were soups and chicken, homemade noodles, *knaidlach* and *kreplach* (K-rations) and definitely the best blintze maker. My job, at Yom Kippur time, was to press the dough in making the *Kreple* triangles. *Gribenes* (Jewish popcorn) was our

delight. Now, with concentration on cholesterol, it's a no-no, but my mouth waters when I think of *Gribenes* on matzo.

Our seder table was correct in all details, including pillows on papa's chair. Mama and papa had silver beakers which exist to this day. The Haggadah was read rapidly in certain passages so we would not get impatient. We joined in at certain parts. As always, we had guests. The menu was the customary gefilte fish, chicken soup and *knaidlach*, baked chicken, the allowable vegetables, and compote, definitely ending with tea. Papa was a great tea drinker. Almost daily he would line up at least six glasses of tea, and with a cube of sugar in his mouth between his teeth, he would sip the tea, sometimes from the dish.

Besides the holidays and *Shabbos*, to break up the daily grind, the other social activity was on Saturday night when the relatives living in the neighborhood would get together for a *farbrengen*. This included discussing current events, telling jokes, gossiping, etc. Tea, cake, and fruit were served. Of course family functions like weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, and *Brisses* were added enjoyable events.

Papa's social activities were more extensive because of his shul activities and meetings of his organizations. He always came home from a night meeting with a goodie for "NFK", which meant *Nem far dee kinder* [take something for the children]. Sometimes it meant a corned-beef sandwich.

The New Haven Green played a big part in our lives. Going there was one of our rewards as children. Within walking distance, we stopped at the fountain to drink when we arrived, then settled on the benches to feed the pigeons. Everything seemed so big and awesome; the churches, the main library, the courthouse.

Skinner School on State Street, opposite St. Stanislaus Church, was our neighborhood school. In 1893 it housed the State Normal School to train young ladies to become teachers. It moved to a new building at 2 Howe Street in 1896. Little did I know, when I entered kindergarten at Skinner School, that fifteen years later I would be a young lady graduating as a teacher at the Howe Street location, and in 1965 would receive my BS in Education from Southern Connecticut State College at 521 Crescent Street. From the little beginning at Skinner School, it has now achieved university status

with thousands of students, and is known as Southern Connecticut State University.

My sister, Ida, of blessed memory, preceded me in going through the same routine and graduating from the New Haven State Normal School, and later from the college with her degree.

My first recollection of an event brings me back to Skinner School, at age four, when I was taken to begin my formal education in kindergarten. I don't remember being prepared for this step into the world or how I got there. The only thing stuck in my mind is that it took the combined efforts of my sister, Ida, brother Ruby, and Miss Adams, the teacher, to force my flailing arms and kicking legs through the doorway into the classroom. Miss Adams was such a sweet teacher, young and smiling, and murmuring encouragement. I survived the year without much more travail.

The other experience that left an impact on me during that year occurred during the Christmas season. We had made the usual holiday decorations, and one of my take-home gifts was a small basket of goodies. Fashioned from green construction paper, held together with shiny brass fasteners, filled with colorful candy, it was the height of my achievement.

My older brother and sister, who usually took me home, were not around at dismissal time, so I proceeded alone. The weather was freezing, streets icy, as I trudged along, clutching my precious basket in my unmittened hand. Fingers numbed from the cold, tears started, leading to sobbing when I reached home. As I handed the basket to papa, who came to greet me at the door (Papa usually met us after school), I weepingly sang a song I was taught. I wanted to show him how much I had learned. He gently led me in, and in later years used to tease me with, "Tell Me What You Got For Me, Santa Claus."

I was in the third grade when President Wilson declared war on Germany in April 1917. I remember that we helped the war effort by buying war stamps at school. My personal experience with a bona fide World War I soldier came from the courtship, and later marriage, of Joe Tanyser to Rose Weinberg. Rose lived with us at the time, working at a factory in the neighborhood. It was exciting to see a soldier in uniform, and very romantic to see the couple, sitting under our catalpa tree on the lawn, arms entwined. Their marriage

took place in the dining room of our "Elastic House", and our families continued a friendship for many years.

I go to sixth grade now for another "special." It was on the retirement of our principal, Sara E. Briggs. I was chosen to give the speech with the presentation of the gift. For that occasion mama had a dressmaker sew up a new dress for me. That in itself was a plus since I usually wore my sister's hand-me-downs. The dress was made of tan and blue plaid with a ruffle of blue around the collar. I was so happy in it.

There I stood on the fire escape off the third grade classroom, with the entire school, teachers and pupils, facing me from the school yard. Miss Briggs stood behind me with her hands on my shoulders as I recited my speech. I was not quite eleven years old and this was my first public appearance. Two years later, when I graduated from Orange Street School with honors, my older brother, Ruby gave me a gold fountain pen for a gift. He was only fifteen years old, in high school, and working part time as a Western Union delivery boy—on a bicycle, of course. Ruby was always there for me, until the end of his days in 1981.

Our neighborhood was of mixed ethnic groups, mainly Italian, Irish, Polish, and Jewish. Our street, William Street, was between two large thoroughfares, State Street and Grand Avenue, within reach for everyone's needs. Congregation Mogen David on Bradley Street and Congregation B'nai Sholom on Olive Street were the two closest synagogues. Due to highway construction and population shifts, those synagogues no longer exist.

Most of our shopping was done on Grand Avenue. It is still an area lined on either side by stores, concentrating on furniture. But in my growing years, there was everything available; kosher products, groceries, bakeries, butcher shops, dry goods, hardware, drug stores, and a Victor Record store. There was also Jimmy's Nicolette, Dreamland Theater, where we used to watch the Perils of Pauline. As a child I was overwhelmingly lost in the crowds of shoppers traversing the sidewalks.

To make it even easier, we had traveling vendors with horse-drawn wagons or with pushcarts. The Italian vendor sang his vegetables with "Escarole." The fish man pushed a contraption that looked

somewhat like a boat, having two sides coming up like a pitched roof. Opening the sides, one could see the fish ensconced in a bed of broken ice. Out would come the mistress of the house and choose her fish which would be weighed, beheaded and cleaned. Fish heads and insides were thrown to the waiting felines. The cat and dog food industry was not yet flourishing.

My uncle was the vegetable man with horse and wagon. His horse knew the route without guidance. He did not live in the neighborhood, but came to visit his parents, grandpa and grandma, at the same time selling his supplies. Our iceman lived a few doors away and the ragman came regularly, buying and selling. I can hear the words, "Cash pay for rags." The knife and scissors sharpener also came in very handy.

For entertainment and physical activities we had dances and games in the school yard after session. Plenty of snow in winter supplied the snowball fights and belly flopping on sleds. Mama did not believe in sleds or skates for fear of accidents, but we managed to share our neighbors' equipment.

I remember one winter afternoon vividly because I equate it with my new red velvet coat. I was about nine or ten and we had a heavy snowfall. The fresh, untrammeled snow in its purity was a sight of pristine beauty. I couldn't wait to go out to play. Mama dressed me in my long underwear, a camisole with a necklace of camphor, a slip, dress, stockings, leggings, and arctics. On top was my prized possession, the red and black velvet coat. It was a present from my uncle, Eli, the late Eli Moore, who operated a children's store for many years. Mittens were pinned to the sleeves of the coat, and a knitted white, soft fuzzy hat and scarf topped my attire.

Out I went and joined the children who were already belly-flopping with their sleds. We had the street to ourselves, no fear of cars, and so we made our designs on nature's beautiful blanket. When play-time was over and mama called me, I seemed to dance in with the wind, cheeks all aglow, face smiling and glistening with complete exhilaration. As I passed the hall tree mirror, I saw my reflection, and to this day when we have a fresh snowfall, I am reminded of that happy little girl.

My biggest thrill was the chickens which mama raised for a time. The hatching eggs were placed in a big white bowl in a bed filled with cotton batting. Every day I ran to examine the bowl, and finally I was able to watch the miracle of the breaking shells with the little chicks peeping out.

In our high school days we had basketball games and dancing in the gym, while at home we entertained ourselves. We were avid readers. We made our fun by playing geography games and trying to outdo each other in adding columns of figures. Some of us took lessons in piano, violin and dancing. My sister, Ida, took piano lessons and was into jazz. We would sit on the porch with our friends, singing and harmonizing. That's when I discovered that putting toilet tissue over a comb and blowing on it in a singing tune, produced special musical effects similar to a harmonica.

Our doors were always open, and mama fed any needy wayfarer. We were fortunate in having a bathtub and telephone before our neighbors did, and so we shared these with them. They, in turn, helped us in doing certain chores prohibited on the Sabbath, chiefly lighting the stove. Our neighbors respected our religion and we theirs.

Papa's installment business petered out when his customers couldn't afford to even pay the fifty cents a week. This was about 1927. His next enterprise was opening a dry goods store on Grand Avenue opposite Bradley Street. It was a partnership called "Moore and Cohen," Cohen providing the capital. I was in high school and worked part time as a clerk. The full-fashioned silk stockings fascinated me. Unfortunately, the timing was poor and the Great Depression in 1929 killed that venture.

This was a great blow to papa and there was worry in the family. Still, papa kept up his involvement in the Congregation Mogen David on Bradley Street, where he had been an active member from the time he arrived in New Haven. The congregants consisted of many people from the State Street area who lived closer to the reform synagogue, Mishkan Israel, but preferred an Orthodox shul. They lived and had businesses on State Street extending to Fair Haven. So, together with the Grand Avenue area through Fair Haven it was a very viable synagogue where Bar Mitzvahs and other *sim-*

chas took place. One wedding which I know occurred there was the marriage of Arthur Arotsky to Ruth Siegle. The synagogue had two floors; the first for the men and a gallery on the second floor for the women. The basement was used for *kiddush* after the daily services and also by small children during the holidays. On Simchas Torah the dancing with the Torahs took place there.

For many years papa was the mainstay of the shul, from sexton and *Baal Tefiloh*, to President. Up until the very end, when membership decreased, papa took the responsibility for the daily *minyan* and pulled the Grand Avenue merchants out of their stores so that this important service was held.

It turned out that his association with the shul was an added boon, because after his business failed, due to his knowledge and background, he became the teacher at the Grand Avenue Free Hebrew School located at 39 Bradley Street opposite Lyon Street. The building had a center entrance and vestibule on the first floor. The reception room was on the left and the two rooms on the right were used as a kitchen and boardroom. This was also where the Grand Avenue Free Loan Association met on Sunday mornings. The members of the board in the early twenties were; Oscar Moore, Barney Arotsky, Harry Magid, Mike Abrams and Max Kaminsky. Sunday is still meeting day, but the name has been changed to the Hebrew Free Loan and Burial Association.

The reception room was used for Bar Mitzvah parties and weddings which took place at the shul. One wedding that came to my attention occurred on September 15, 1940 when Arthur Arotsky married Ruth Siegel.

The Talmud Torah, or classroom, was on the second floor; a regular schoolroom with desks and chairs, blackboard, writing books and *siddurim*. Papa had many pupils during his tenure, preparing the boys for Bar Mitzvah and teaching the girls Hebrew and Yiddish. He had some adults too. Martha Schwartz used to go to the school from her father-in-law's (Isadore Miller's) business and take lessons in Yiddish using the *Forward* as a text. Another report came from Rose Gordon, who stated that she learned enough Hebrew to help her own children when they went to the Hebrew Day School.

The private tutoring included boys living outside the Grand Avenue area, from Cedar Hill Avenue to Newhall Street and other parts of the city. Papa first used his bicycle for traveling, but later rode the city transit system. I know many families who engaged papa as a *melamed* in preparing their sons for Bar Mitzvah, but I will only give a first hand report from someone closest to me, by brother-in-law, Ted Levine, as told to my sister Shirley. We did not know him at the time.

Papa would bike from home to Newhall Street to teach the Levine boys, Isadore (Ted) and Hyman. I quote from my sister,

> He was very patient, not the stereotyped task master with ruler handy. He instructed the boys in the chanting and the tropes, so they could read from the Torah. His patience paid off at Bar Mitzvah time when his students made an admirable showing.
>
> After the instruction he was given tea, sugar and cakes as a bonus. Due to the knowledge Isadore acquired, he was appointed Acting Chaplain in the United States Infantry in World War II, when the regular chaplain was transferred. Isadore served in this capacity for a year, presiding at all holiday and burial services. Even ten years after his Bar Mitzvah, he remembered his *Melamed*, Oscar Moore's teaching. Papa did not live to know and enjoy the fact that his pupil "Izzy" (Ted) married his daughter, Shirley.

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree" can apply to Shirley and Ted's son, Oscar, who is named after papa. Ozzie, as we call him, is following in his grandpa's footsteps, carrying on the tenets of our Judaic faith. The Bay Cities Synagogue, located in the Venice neighborhood of Los Angeles, is very much like papa's Congregation, Mogen David, was. His community is a "laboratory of living Judaism," stressing Jewish learning and tradition. Thus our heritage will be carried on.

During World War II, when the need arose, the final change in the "Elastic House" occurred and it became a dwelling with three separate apartments, leaving little space for roomers. Papa and mama continued to work hand in hand with the care of the house and their separate careers. They also were active in community affairs concerned with Jewish life. I'll mention some that I know about. Papa

was secretary of *Maos Chittim* for several years, active in the Grand Avenue Free Loan Association and the Independent Connecticut Lodge, and was president of the Congregation Mogen David for many years. He also belonged to the Mechanic's Loan Association.

Mama was very charitable. She was particularly interested in helping Yeshivas and Yeshiva students, perhaps because her father, Jonathan, was a student of Torah, and her brother, Rabbi Moses Romm, was a long time rabbi in South Africa and wrote many books in Afrikaans as well as in Hebrew. She was a member of the Sisters of David, and was active in getting the present *mikvah* started. She was also on the committee for delivering supplies to needy families on the holidays. A regular visitor at the Jewish Home for the Aged, she was known as the "Lady with the Oranges." She was also a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish Home for Children and Day Care Nursery.

Although papa was a helper as "Mr. Mom," he definitely did not replace her, for she was the one in charge of discipline and ethics, health and welfare. She cooked up a mixture of prunes, apricots, raisins, and some senna leaves which was the most pleasant laxative imaginable. Her two standbys for colds and sore throats were Vicks and iodine. She took us to the doctor and dispensary (the Yale Clinic) when necessary. And once when I fell on a jagged piece of glass, she cleansed and bandaged the area. The remaining scar was not much worse than a surgeon's stitching.

Keeping house was very difficult in those days without our modern appliances. I don't know when vacuum cleaners were invented, but we never had one. Small rugs were hung out on the line and beaten with a carpet beater, which looked like a large fan made of straw-like material. The larger rug in the dining room was cleansed with a damp mop, which reminds me that new vacuums today are cleaning with the use of water, to eliminate the dust, etc. Friday, to get ready for *Shabbos*, the kitchen floor was washed and newspaper spread all over, remaining for days. We didn't like it, but it seemed the custom of the time.

In discipline, her word was law and we got answers like, "Better you cry now than I cry later. Look down not up. Use brains, not brawn." etc. She did not want us to be frivolous (*lachtzenik*). But

in our growing years we didn't like those adages, or the repeated urging about responsibility, and excluding things we wanted to do. So, the usual arguments ensued. Mama didn't like it either, because in later years, when I translated her writings, I found these lines,

> Then my children, be strong and happy
> We should be together, none of us apart
> Parents are often uncertain how to reach their children,
> And lucky are the children who understand a parent's heart.

Her writings brought many other things to light, about her character and feelings. Papa also wrote some poems on occasion. At times of frustration, papa softened the rigidity by his humor and by showing how proud he was of us. His background as a teacher and his experience with people as president of the shul, made him more tolerant of human weaknesses. He was definitely an extrovert and the "social one." He liked fun and jokes too; some of his jokes were original. So we got a good balance from both our parents, and grew up to be *menchen*.

Papa's sister, who came here from Europe in the early twenties with her husband Morris Simon and her child Irving, lived at 715 Grand Avenue, near Franklin Street. Their apartment was on the second floor over the dry goods store owned by papa's older brother, Louis Moore. The Simons opened up a kosher restaurant at that location, which they operated for many years. It served many of the Grand Avenue merchants as well as the employees of the Clock company nearby. Papa was almost a daily visitor there for tea and family discussion. A surprise thirty-fourth anniversary party was given at Simon's Restaurant for mama and papa in 1936.

Education was primary in our lives. Mama wanted us to be teachers for the added reason that we wouldn't have to work on *Shabbos*. She got two out of four.

My older sister, Ida Moore Hyman, of blessed memory, was a graduate of Southern Connecticut State College and taught in Plainville, Hamden, and New Haven. My brother Reuben Moore, of blessed memory, was a prominent CPA, graduate of Connecticut College of Commerce, and the senior member of the firm Bailey, Moore, Glazer, Schaefer & Proto at the time of his death. I'm next,

and dually skilled, having worked in the office of General Ice Cream Corp. and a graduate of Southern Connecticut, mentioned previously. My teaching was in the New Haven public schools. My sister, Shirley Moore Levine, currently living in Los Angeles, is an honor graduate from Hillhouse and finished a course at Stone's Business College. She also worked at General Ice Cream Corp. in New Haven, and in Los Angeles, was office manager for her husband's drum business, and is currently managing their real estate holdings.

On January 25, 1948 papa died of a heart attack from shoveling snow after a big snowfall. The late Rabbi Maurice Hecht wrote a letter of condolence to our family from which I will quote one paragraph.

> The Jewish nation as a whole can scarcely afford to lose as valiant and straightforward a Jew as your husband was. Throughout his life he afforded Jewry a picture of steadfast and unflinching devotion to his faith, his Torah, and his G-d.

The funeral service for papa was held in his shul, Congregation Mogen David. Again the little shul was packed.

Mama continued her life without her "diamond" as she called papa, for nine more years. She was independent, doing less work with real estate and depended on her own property for her income. Mama continued to go to shul on *Shabbos* and holidays until her illness and subsequent death. We always came to shul to see our parents on Rosh Hashanah regardless of our own affiliations. Mama was ahead of her times in many ways and old-fashioned in others; her dress and her superstitions. She carried a large handbag, but her money was knotted in her stockings.

I don't know where mama got her ideas on styles, but because she wanted to keep warm she used to wear a short-sleeved sweater, blouse or jacket, over a long-sleeved garment. We thought it was peculiar then, but currently it is fashionable and is called "the layered look." She made all her own hats because she was trained as a milliner in Europe and told stories about the Russian ladies with their plumed hats. She didn't wear plumes, but her hats were definitely different.

Her writings at night went on, I'll quote again, regarding Israel:

> We should understand that if we have a war,
> The penalty will be more,
> So much blood will be spilled
> Before many lives will be fulfilled.
>
> We will be called staunch and proud,
> When our Holy Land to us will be allowed,
> The Jews have to do what's at hand,
> Give some charity—everyone in this land.

And she did, a very substantial sum in those days.

Mama died in the holy month of Elul, September 19, 1957 of an inoperable condition. Again, I quote from condolences sent by Rabbi Maurice Hecht:

> I trust that you will be comforted in your future years by the knowledge that your mother has left the greatest heritage that any woman can leave, and that is a fine name and memories of a devoted mother.



Officers at the Bradley Street Shul, in front of the Holy Ark. Left to right: Charles Mermin, Morris Cohen, Rabbi Leizer Gorelick, Oscar Moore, and Jack Allinson. (COURTESY OF SARA (SALLY) MOORE LIPWICH)

We, of the first generation American born, got the best of two worlds; the fortitude and ethics of our immigrant parents, and the educational opportunities from the country of our birth. For we achieved success in our fields of endeavor, and retained the sound principles of our forbears. I feel I was doubly blessed with my parents. They left a good name, I hope I can do the same.

Author's Note: The Grand Avenue Free Hebrew School closed in 1949, a year after papa's death. Congregation Mogen David was demolished during redevelopment in 1966, to make room for Interstate 91. The Yahrzeit plaques and records were given to the Young Israel Synagogue with compensation to cover the necessary service.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: SARA (SALLY) MOORE LIPWICH is a native of New Haven and still resides in the city. She attended the Skinner and Orange Street Schools, and graduated from Hillhouse High School and from the Connecticut State Normal School. Following her marriage to Mitchel Lipwich (now deceased), a native of Canada, she lived with him in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia for about a year before returning to New Haven. They were the parents of two children, George and Leah (deceased). Later in life, Sally began part-time teaching, returned to school, and, as a grandmother, received her BS degree in Education from Southern Connecticut State College. She then taught full-time at Betsy Ross and at Bishop Woods School.

She is a member of the Westville Synagogue and Sisterhood, Jewelites, Mr. & Mrs. Club, Hadassah, the West River Senior Center, JCC Senior Center, Bikur Cholim Breakfast Club and Sisterhood, and the Golan Chapter of ARMDI. A number of her writings were published in the JCC Senior Scribe *and in the book,* After Long Silence, *an anthology published by the West River Senior Center.*

She also has three grandchildren and two great-grand children.









Above, left: Sally Finkelstein (Horwitz), Bamberg, Germany, 1945. Above, right: (left to right) Frances Finkelstein (Klarfeld), Bela Glick, Mary Finkelstein (Glick), Helene Pepper, Sally Finkelstein (Horwitz), Bamberg, Germany, 1946. Below, left: Thanksgiving in New Haven, 1953, (left to right) adults; Leon Glick, Mary Glick, Sally Horwitz, Morton Horwitz, Helene Pepper. Children; Leonard Horwitz, Stanley Glick, Esther Glick, and Anna Pepper. Below right: Sally Horwitz (right) with Tiby Leginsky in 1951. (COURTESY OF SALLY HORWITZ)

COMING TO AMERICA
——————————1949

by Sally Horwitz

AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR I found myself in Bamberg, Germany, working for the *Judenrat*, 'Jewish Family Service'. In January 1945, I, along with my two sisters, Manya and Franya, were freed from the concentration camps by the Russians. I tried to return to my home town of Zwolen in Poland, but there was no home, no family, and only a handful of frightened Jews there. At this time the Poles were on a rampage against returning Jewish survivors. A pogrom was underway in Kielce, 45 kilometers away. I barely escaped with my life and returned shakily to where we had been liberated and where the Russians maintained control. This was the city of Czestochowa.

Poland and Eastern Europe were in complete chaos and most of the Jews had to get out of the Russian occupied zone. All the existing confusion made it possible to cross over borders into the American zone of Occupied Germany and to reach Bamberg.

My brother-in-law, Leon Glick, who had married my sister Manya after the war, had some good friends in Bamberg who also hailed from Czestochowa, his home town. One of these was Jacob

(Yonkel) Pepper who, along with his wife Helene (*Henye*), became very dear to me during the four years we lived in Bamberg—without a country. The Peppers were among the first of us to leave for America. An uncle of Helene, Jack Jacobowitz (of Jack's Bakery), had signed the required papers to bring them to "Nef Haven" early in 1948.

As soon as the Peppers settled themselves in New Haven they started the process of getting papers for their home town *landsleit* and included me in their efforts. So in July 1949, a number of us started to move out, but not all together, nor at the same time. My turn to go came up and I took a train to the port of Bremerhaven. It took at least two weeks until a place was found for me on the troop transport ship *Marlin Marlene* that was bringing American soldiers to Germany and going back to the United States with refugees.

I was one of those refugees and I was alone. Because I was single, I was separated from my sister Mary (*Manya*) and her family. They left on another ship a day after my departure. My other sister, Frances (*Franya*), was also married by this time and scheduled for St. Louis. Not only was I alone, but I was also frightened. I thought I never would make it to America, what with the ship being so full of Ukrainians and only a handful of Jews among them. I was sure that they would kill us all and throw us overboard. It was a scary two weeks while we were crossing the Atlantic.

Finally on July 15, at night, we were standing on deck to see all the lights as we neared New York. Then we sighted *that* Lady, holding high the torch, who was telling us, "You are safe, you are free, no one can harm you." All night we watched the twinkling lights, which we later found out were from the headlights of thousands and thousands of cars. In the morning we went through customs—and I hate to tell you—I had nothing, but nothing, to declare!

Some ladies from the Joint Distribution Committee were waiting at the dock. They were calling out my name, "Sala Finkelstein." They packed me and the few other Jews from the ship into a couple of taxis and were taking us to the railroad station. As we rode I was able to see a little of New York. It was hot and humid and the city certainly was not too clean. I was flabbergasted at it all—at the tall buildings and at so many people of all colors and shapes. And there,

out of some huge wall, a man's face suddenly appeared with smoke rings coming out of his mouth. This was Times Square.

We hadn't eaten all day. The taxis stopped for us at a cafeteria, but I could not eat. I was too excited and the smells must have gotten to me. Never had I seen so much food! Almost everyone on the *Marlin Marlene* had become seasick coming across the ocean, but I hadn't. Only now did I become nauseous.

At last the ladies from the Joint got me to Grand Central Station and physically put me on a train going to New Haven, all by myself. What I recall mostly about the ride to New Haven was looking out of the dirty windows and seeing lines upon lines of underwear and other clothing floating up in the air between the tall tenement buildings. It was puzzling. Clotheslines, and how they worked, had to be explained to me.

While on the train I had time to reflect about what had happened in the past and to think and worry about what awaited me in New Haven and in this country. Some American Jewish soldiers had made contact with me at the *Judenrat* and had become friendly and helpful to us. They briefed us about the United States and brought us magazines to look over. In one of the magazines I saw an article about New Haven, except that it really was about Yale University *in* New Haven, and how the Yale football team had elected its first black captain, Levi Jackson. Then my thoughts turned to the Peppers, hoping that they had not forgotten me and would be waiting at the station.

They were there! Thank G-d they did not forget! There was Helene, looking very much pregnant; Eva and Leon Kruger; a handsome young Irishman named Billy; and of course 'Yonkel' Jack Pepper himself. They had spread themselves along the platform to make sure that I would not get lost.

I spent my first few days and nights in this country at the Peppers, along with my sister, her husband, and their eighteen-month old baby, Esther. They had arrived in New Haven a day later than I, from Boston. Jack and Helene put us at ease. Not only did we meet many newcomers at their house but Helene soon began stuffing us with food we hadn't seen in about ten years. She kept all kinds of cheeses

on the table, along with herring, sour cream, and of course, ice cream.

What can I tell you! In case you could not guess, it was not long before I started to burst out of my clothes. I just did not stop eating. There was so much food, yet I was afraid that it all would disappear. It took some time until I realized that food would be there for the next day, and the next, and the next.

The Peppers lived on Washington Avenue on the second floor. They had a great front porch and had all of their electricity coming out of one hanging light fixture in the kitchen. It seemed that every refugee in town came to the Peppers, and because the summer was so hot, everyone headed to the porch. If we would have known how old and sagging the porch was, I doubt if we would have crowded to get on it. The floor of the house was not any better. But the hospitality of Jack and Helene was wonderfully warm and there always were goodies for everybody.

After two weeks my sister, her family, and I moved into a single room of a second floor flat on Button Street; one room for my sister, her husband, her daughter, a crib, all of our belongings, and me. Benny Kerson, old, hard of hearing, and weak in sight, wandered around the rest of the rooms. I slept on a sofa. That was the best that the Jewish Family Service and Mr. Offenbach could do at the time.

It wasn't long after my coming to New Haven that I began wondering why the Jewish community was ignoring us. Not having seen a normal family home in years, I was curious to see how people lived here, but not one person asked me to his or her house. It was Irish Billy, able to speak Yiddish better than any American born Jew, who first took me out. With him I had my first encounter with pizza and other Italian dishes. He also ushered me around world famous Yale University and the historic New Haven Green. It was an Italian girl, Dolores, who brought me by bus to Savin Rock where she treated me to my first hot dog.

Soon I was placed in a job with the Rosenberg Bakery on Legion Avenue. The Jewish Family Service put me there knowing that I was multilingual and could handle shoppers of all backgrounds who came to Legion Avenue from all over the area.

My work hours were late, especially on Thursday and Saturday nights. At first I would walk home from Legion Avenue, at night, all the way to Button Street in the Hill section, not something anyone would think of doing today. A young man named Mort Horwitz worked with his father next door in their dry goods store, Horwitz House. He volunteered to take me home and then continued to do so regularly. It had to be straight back to Button Street, because my brother-in-law, Leon, would be waiting for me, and no nonsense. Before I knew what hit me, we were going out steadily. Mort could understand Yiddish but wasn't much good at speaking the language. I was the reverse with English. Yet we managed very well.

For one of our first dates, Mort asked me to go to a Yale football game with him. To me, football was *fussball* as played in Germany and all of Europe, which I always had enjoyed watching. Mort pointed out that Levi Jackson would be playing, which added to my excitement.

What did I see! Men running around in tight pants, jumping on each other. There was no ball in sight, it was hidden most of the time. In fact, there wasn't much in the way of the feet being used at all. Suddenly everyone stood up and screamed "touchdown," and the band started playing. It took me a while to understand football and to realize that in this country, *fussball* is called "soccer."

Early on I started going to night school, but soon switched to day classes. All I wanted to do was to learn English and to become a US citizen. I hadn't thought of marriage. Back in Bamberg some young men tried to *stroshe* (threaten) me that I never would find a man in America and that I should get married before departing. They proved wrong. Within weeks I was engaged, and became a bride in less than a year.

My engagement party took place at the Button Street address, on Thanksgiving Day, in the midst of a terrible ice storm. On April 16, 1950, Morton and I were married in the studio of the late Rabbi Leizer Gorelik on George Street. I was all of 21 years old. I believe in the Yiddish word *bashert*; it has worked out fine.

We went on an educational honeymoon. In my citizen classes, I had learned much of American history and wanted to see those places about which I had studied. So, our honeymoon took us to

New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. Mort's family was helpful in getting me to adjust. What was surprising was how well I was accepted by not only his mother, father, and brothers, but also by his aunts, uncles, and cousins. They visited me at every opportunity, especially at our first home on 45 Truman Street in the Hill section of New Haven, not too far from Button Street. We had purchased a partnership share of a two-family house and moved in downstairs. A fine gentleman, Kuni Lebedeker, was our partner and lived on the second floor with his wife. Both were quite elderly and ill, but became very interested in my welfare, sometimes too much. They listened to the radio constantly and blasted away in particular when, daily, the Lone Ranger came on with his "Hi-Ho Silver."

There, on Truman Street, I met a very nice group of young people that were my age. There was Shirley Plotnick who took me grocery shopping and showed me what to buy. Also, she and Hilda Geller introduced me to Mah Jong. Non-Jews, close to me on the street, were the Kennys, the Turners, and Trofie from the corner grocery store. But my first friendship, and one that turned out to be long and wonderfully lasting, was with Tiby Leginsky. She and her husband Izzie knew Mort, and on the first Yom Kippur night, even before our engagement, they spotted us walking along Button Street and pulled us into their car. We all went to a great post holiday dance in Bridgeport. After that, Tiby and I became almost inseparable.

Tiby's mother lived a little way down the block on Button Street. She was a great lady who practically adopted me into the close-knit Bixon family. Mrs. Bixon acted as a mother to me, teaching me what and how to cook as well as how to handle my new husband. Tiby, of blessed memory, *shlepped* me everywhere, introducing me to people in different organizations and making me participate in many community activities. We even got pregnant with our firstborns together. Then Mrs. Bixon would feed me while saying, "*Ess, ess, 'siz goot far dem kind*," ["Eat, eat, it's good for the child."]

Now, food came to my door. My neighbor, Mr. Kaplan, sold fruit from his truck. Mr. Bellin drove around hawking his watermelons, yelling "WaterMELOWN, sweeter than your mother-in-law." There was also an egg man and a milk man, and in particular, there was Nick, the fish man. Nick would drive slowly down the street

blowing his fish horn while all the cats of the neighborhood trailed in back of his cart. Whenever he stopped all the wives would gather around to make their selection. The first time I bought from him, I waited for my turn and then pointed to some nice, round, clean-looking objects. Nick asked if I was new here and what my name was. I told him my name was "Horwitz", so then he asked "do you keep kosher?" I answered, "yes." So Nick, while pointing at what I had picked, said, "you can't have that, you can't have that." He then showed me what a kosher-keeping person was *allowed* to eat. Anyway, my refrigerator was always packed. I would panic if I couldn't replace the empty spaces right away. Sweet corn was one item that took a long time getting used to eating. In Europe, corn was fed to the cattle.

When Mort started to court me, he introduced me to his brothers Harold and Sidney and their wives. Harold's wife, Ruth, was very ill and died shortly before my wedding. Her daughter, Sharon, then was seven years old. I became attached to Sharon and she to me. Her father worked long hours so whenever Mort and I had time we would pick Sharon up and take her everywhere we went. She became our chaperone. When I was pregnant for the first time, Sharon remarked, "Oh, you have a Gerald McBoing-Boing in your stomach!" She was referring to a cartoon character popular at that time. Now, forty years later, Sharon Levinson has three Gerald McBoing-Boings of her own and she still is an important part of our lives.

The years have skipped by. From Truman Street we moved to upper Chapel Street in 1963. We have three grown, married children and nine grandchildren, all strong in their faith. Leonard, the oldest is a doctor, specializing in bone marrow transplants, and lives in Cincinnati with his wife, Shelley, and four children. Arthur is the Associate Publisher of the Detroit Jewish News and the Atlanta Jewish Times, as well as connected to the Baltimore Jewish Times. He and his wife, Gina, have three youngsters. My daughter, Laurie, is the most recently married, living in Baltimore with her husband, Danny Duhan, an Engineer. She is a Corporate Planner and CPA at the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company and have two children. I get a lot of *naches* from each and every one of them.

I made new friends on Chapel Street, too numerous to mention. Jeanne Einhorn, more than anyone else, has helped Americanize me, encouraging me to get involved with PTAs, with the United Order of True Sisters, and into some politics. Currently I belong to the Holocaust Survivors Fellowship of New Haven, of which my good friend William Rosenberg is President, the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, B'nai B'rith, and Congregation Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim.

A lot happened to me before I came to this city, and much has taken place since. Here I have recounted briefly my coming to America and how I became absorbed into the Jewish community of New Haven. *G-d Bless America!*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: SALLY HORWITZ was born Sala Finkelstein in Zwolen Poland, in 1928. From 1941–1942, after the Germans had overrun Poland, she was forced into slave-labor on a farm in Policzna, and in 1942 was deported to the concentration camp at Skarzysko–Kamienna. In 1944, with the advance of the Russian Forces, she was moved to the concentration camp in Czestochowa. After being liberated by the Russians in 1945 she was subjected, not only to harsh Soviet rule, but also to the pogroms that erupted in Poland following WWII. Sally, with her two sisters (the only members of her family to survive the war), and a group of fellow-survivors, escaped in the spring of 1945 through the rugged mountains of southern Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, eventually making their way to Bamberg, Germany, in the American Zone. In Bamberg she worked for the Judenrat, *registering and housing stateless Jewish refugees. In 1949 she was brought to America and to New Haven.*

She has served as President of the local branch of the United Order of True Sisters, secretary of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, and vice-president of the Holocaust Survivors Fellowship of Greater New Haven. In 1950 she married Morton Horwitz, a native of New Haven. The couple has three children, Leonard, Arthur, and Laurie, and nine grandchildren.

Here History Is Going

by Susan L. Neitlich

BY NEW HAVEN'S DOWNTOWN standards Whalley Avenue, between Carmel Street and Winthrop Avenue, is quiet and gray early on a weekday morning but for the hum of traffic. From the looks of it, this is just another block on "automobile row," as Whalley Avenue has been nicknamed, because of its small collection of car dealerships. A "drive-thru" strip with an aluminum siding, rundown neatness, this car-choked artery takes people to the Yale-downtown New Haven area from northwestern city-suburban Westville and country-suburban Woodbridge and the other way around, but it is seldom a destination in itself. It is a seam—and some say a ragged one—in the fabric of the neighborhoods in this northwestern part of New Haven.

A variety of ethnic groups have inched their way down this stretch of Whalley Avenue, northwest out of the heart of the city. First came the Yankees and the Irish, and then, starting in about the 1930s, when Whalley Avenue was just beginning to turn from a residential to a more commercial street, the Jews moved in in great numbers from their poorer quarters on Oak Street. When many of the Jews fled the city for the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, the blacks slowly began to take their place, spilling over from nearby Dixwell. "Settlers" from all of these groups have remained permanent residents in the neighborhoods bordering Whalley Avenue. To the northeast is Beaver Hills, a stable and relatively integrated (Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and black) development built in the 1910s as an upscale city enclave. And on the other side of Whalley is the Edgewood section, a black-and-white mix of working-class and middle-class families, an area that seems to "turn over" at least once every decade.

The changes these neighborhoods have seen, in the last half-century or so in particular, have been quickly reflected on Whalley Avenue which is now grappling with the same problems of drugs and crime that the rest of New Haven is facing. But amidst this urban tumult is a survivor, on lower Whalley Avenue, a Jewish deli called Chuck's Lunchette from the era of street cars, neighborhood movie theaters, and kosher butchers and delicatessens. Preserved from a seemingly simpler time, Chuck's, which has served customers "a meal in every sandwich" since 1954, is a leftover from the vanishing "old Jewish" New Haven.

A direct link to the Oak Street–Legion Avenue neighborhood, once the Jewish ghetto in New Haven, Chuck himself was born on Asylum Street—"off Legion Avenue"—into a family of Eastern European descent, "where", Chuck says, "nobody had anything but each other—they made a living and survived." His grandfather, Abba Alpert (a hunchback and not a well man), was a kosher butcher whose shop was at 109 Oak Street. Of his six children, three stayed in the meat business. Abba's son Louis, Chuck's father, became a cattle dealer. Of the next generation of Alperts, Chuck's Aunt Ida says, most went into the professions. Obviously comfortable with the old family line of work, Chuck, after cooking in other men's shops, opened a kosher-style restaurant in the 1950s, his Lunchette on Whalley Avenue. Then, the neighborhood was, what he calls, a "great ethnic neighborhood," very much filled with Jewish customers.

But right along with many of his customers, Chuck and his family moved out of the city to suburban Woodbridge. After years of the Jewish flight to the outer regions of the city and the suburbs, the Lunchette—and the loyal diners who have kept it going years after its compatriots went out of business or set up shop elsewhere—is now oddly out of character on this unambitious city block.

The storefronts on Chuck's block are set back from the street on a wide sidewalk; the houses behind and above them are various shades of gray, blue, and tan. A few scrawny city trees, with pom-pom heads too small to cast shade or give shelter, stand by the curb. Homeless men wheel shopping carts filled with refundable cans and bottles, and women make their way to the corner bank, while cars,

buses, and trucks hurtle down the four-lane strip as fast as they can make the lights.

At eight o'clock in the morning, the tidy glass-and-brick facade of Chuck's glows with a cozy yellow light, an oasis in an otherwise unpeopled stretch. Closed until the more civilized afternoon and evening hours are the shops that face Chuck's across the street: The Third World International Cafe, a popular West Indian nightclub, and its upstairs neighbor, Neat Nails and Skin; Claudette's Music and the Record Rack, New Haven's only reggae, calypso, jazz, soul, and gospel music shop, and its culinary sidekick, the West Indian Tropical Delights Ice Cream and Soul Food, which lists, among other dishes, Curry Goat, Oxtail, Cow Foot, Jerk Pork, and guava ice cream, to be eaten by the glow of a tropical mural; Eastern Radio and TV Sales and Service, a seeming electronic spare parts warehouse without a top or bottom; W.C.'s Sports, featuring a sparse line of high-top sneakers and sports jerseys; Big Jim's Papillon Tattoo Extraordinaire, where customers can get gift certificates, "touch ups" of existing designs, or one of the thousands of emblems framed on the walls of this workshop/gallery; and a prototypically New Haven Greek–American-owned red–vinyl-boothed pizza parlor, Whalley Pizza Restaurant. Only the pizza place has its lights on at this hour.

Chuck's side of the street is just slightly busier. To the restaurant's east, West Shore Cleaners, Irving Calechman Realtors, and Executive Transmissions all cater to a late-rising crowd, as do the Hadassah Thrift Shop and the metal-gated New Bundy Jewelry and Gift Shop. At Paramount Package, a corner brown-bag establishment three doors down, a few black men perch on a rickety brown wooden sign in front of the store's ice machine.

Early mornings at Chuck's Lunchette are anything but still. The same can be said of owner Alvin Alpert—or 'Chuck' to his customers. He dances behind the grill, waving his hands in the air, screaming to his wife, "Margie, I need you," with the plaintive but authoritative cry of someone who has just caught his finger in a car door. Chuck is handling short-order in the kitchen, lining up plates on the tall counter in front of him—bagels slathered with inches of cream cheese, scrambled eggs with buttered rolls, diet sodas, chocolate milks, hash browns—and screaming again, this time to one of his

blond waitresses. "Winnie, I need you now." Chuck's customers are blasé. "Winnie, I said I need you now!" Mostly they ignore the stooped man with glasses and slicked back hair who is running the show—or they toss a word or two behind them to the grill.

Chuck's is a restaurant of regulars, especially of those who have made it to more affluent Westville or Woodbridge from the old Jewish neighborhoods, as the expression went, "off Legion Avenue." The daily mid-morning breakfast scene at Chuck's could well be mistaken for a meeting of "The Old Jewish Boys Club of New Haven." Parking their big American cars in the lot next door or out front, in they saunter, first grabbing a *New Haven Register* or *New York Post* from behind the cash register and settling in with a cup of coffee while they wait for their "usual." While they talk prices (cigarettes were thirty cents a carton when they were overseas), politics and business (who's doing what at the Farmer's & Mechanic's Bank), eat eggs and toast, smoke cigarettes, and drink still more coffee, the waitresses limp and shuffle around their tables and each other, offering advice, homespun philosophy, and gratuitous comments.

As breakfast gives way to late morning lunch, the place is starting to fill up with an older, "smart-looking" clientele in plaid jackets who are thinking about steak and cheese sandwiches and potato *latkes*. People are taking their places in beige booths and at tables decked with little glass containers of mustard and bottles of Heinz ketchup. Sandwiches bulging with meats, held together with flimsy toothpicks, are surfacing from the kitchen at a rapid pace onto the high counter in front of the grill. There's a run on chocolate sodas.

Among the diners seated at a cluster of five small, square tables there have been at least as many greetings—to each other, to the waitresses, and to Chuck. Chuck, a man of medium height wearing a pink shirt with the sleeves rolled up past his arm muscles, is in his spot behind the grill. Somehow he has his eyes on the tables, the counter, and the register—all at the same time. Head bent and steamed up glasses sliding down to the end of his nose, he barks orders at Russ, the tall black cook working at his side and to his waitresses, who are now doing a faster shuffle.



Chuck's Lunchette on Whalley Avenue, New Haven, in 1993. The man at the far left in the center picture, facing the camera, is Alvin "Chuck" Alpert. (PHOTOS BY CARL NEWLIN)

Marvin, a tall man weighing well over two hundred and fifty pounds and sporting a large *chai* (the Hebrew word symbolizing 'life'), is waiting patiently to pay. Between the cheeseburger and the pastrami, Chuck spots him at the register. "Jean, go take that cash from him before you do what you're doing." The volume and pitch of Chuck's voice is rising with each outgoing plate, but is becoming more and more muffled by the steady chatter of customers and the clatter of silverware.

"Sure Chuck," the waitress shoots back, "and with my other pair of hands I'll dance." On her way to the register, she drops her wet, gray dishrag on the nearest counter and throws some dirty plates into a bin.

"I figure I've done my time in hell here on earth," says Winnie, another long-time waitress, to nobody in particular, as she beseeches the ceiling. "I've got a ticket straight to heaven," she announces. She schleps a coffee pot back to a table of old-timers, who, after one last story (about the uncle who got his first headache at eighty-four), are positioning toothpicks and making moves to leave. Chuck's wife Marge, who has been seated at the counter with her coffee, nods to Chuck as she heads off to the beauty parlor. So at home are they all—the old-timers, the "smart ladies", the local businessmen—with the food, the banter, and the commotion in this restaurant, their second kitchen, that nobody stops to wonder—what an out-of-towner wouldn't be able to figure out—how a nice Jewish deli like Chuck's ended up on a block like this.

In a small city like New Haven, and especially when it comes to old Jewish New Haven, everyone knows everyone else. Ask an old-timer about Chuck's Lunchette, for example, and he may say matter-of-factly that Chuck simply makes the best pastrami sandwich in town—and then, just so you should know, he'll tell you about Al's Restaurant, once across the street, whose owner, Al Eichenberger sold the shop to two brothers, one of whom "had wife problems." Not only does everyone seem to know everyone else's business, but after a while, it seems that they're all related, if not by blood, then by what might best be called "family history." Why else would it

be—but for family business—that seventy-five-year-old Sydney Bruskin, an old-timer who ran a bicycle shop in downtown New Haven from the 1930s until recently, ventured out to the Westville Synagogue on a cool fall evening to hear memories about the now-extinct kosher butchers of New Haven. On the surface, bicycles have little to do with kosher meat. And Bruskin has never been a kosher man, nor were his parents (Orthodox Jews), once they arrived in this country from Belorussia in 1909.

The evening was, in fact, one of a series of programs sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven (on whose board of directors Bruskin sits), which since 1976 has dedicated itself to the massive project of collecting and cataloguing anything related to Jewish history in this city. But the real connection works something more like this: the Alpert boys, who came from one of the old neighborhood's well-known butcher families, patronized Bruskin's father's barber shop, and so the Bruskins, kosher or not, went to the Alperts for their meat. "One hand washed the other," Bruskin says when he describes how business worked in the old neighborhood of Oak Street.

Ida Senderoff, whose maiden name was Alpert, and who was a high school classmate of Bruskin's, is not a member of the Jewish Historical Society but had every reason to be interested in its evening of butcher-shop nostalgia. Ida, the aunt of Chuck Alpert, clearly underestimated the veterans' keenness to hash out the details of those days and to play a little bit of "Jewish geography." "That was the funniest part," remarked Senderoff, about the crowd of over two hundred who showed up. "I saw people there who were not butchers," she said with amazement.

Bespectacled, becaned, bejeweled, beyarmulked—some in hats or caps—pointing, greeting, patting, kissing, smiling, clasping each others' hands and arms, they streamed into the social room of the Westville Synagogue for this reunion. Besides Bruskin and Ida Senderoff, there came, among many others, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Horowitz from Hamden, Sally and Sherman Kramer from Orange, Herb Setlow from Woodbridge, and Sam Teitelman from West Haven. They came for an evening that started out with the (hesitant) greeting by its host, Dr. Barry Herman of the Historical Society,

"Good evening. Good evening, vegetarians?" The well-groomed women, hair tucked into place, wearing knit and wool suits and high heels, and their husbands, in dark jackets, sat in rows of straight-backed plastic chairs, craning their necks to see if so-and-so was there.

Before he could begin the scheduled program, host Dr. Herman wanted to warn his murmuring audience that there was to be no *kvetching* this evening, no complaints about the butcher who put his thumb on the scale. "Where are our kosher butchers? Where have they all gone?" Dr. Herman asked.

"Once," the tale unwound, "about as far back as most of us can go" to the days (about the 1910s and 1920s) when most of the city's Jews lived on and around Oak Street, there were at least two dozen kosher butchers in New Haven. Between 1905 and 1912, when Jewish immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe peaked, the Jewish population in the New Haven area grew from over five thousand to about twenty thousand. The Oak Street neighborhood, west of New Haven's downtown and its more affluent and settled Orange Street section, was the largest Jewish "ghetto" in the city, but there were others. The adjacent Hill area, encompassing the commercial streets of Washington, Columbus, and Congress Avenues, was also a Jewish and Italian immigrant's haven, and Grand Avenue, to the east of the green, though primarily Italian, also had a small Jewish population.

The members of the Society and the rest of the old neighborhood folks who turned up to listen and *schmooz* had no trouble remembering what was what back then. To sighs of "oh, what a memory," to clucks and laughter, each of a group of five or six butchers and their children and grandchildren, went up to the microphone to recount their stories of a profession, of a way of life, lost but in memory to New Haven's Jews. As if they were filling in the names on a family tree, they rattled off exactly how many shops were on Grand Avenue (two), how many on Washington (two), how many on Arch (one), on Worth (one), on Vernon (one), and on Oak (many). Then they walked through each neighborhood, revisiting the stores. There was Murphy Epstein's market, which opened on Washington Avenue in 1927, and Murphy himself, who was seated halfway back

in the crowd, stood up first reluctantly and then more eagerly, amid loud chuckles and claps, and began to wave and work the rows of his well-wishers. A man in a blue shirt popped up and snapped Murphy's photo. And they remembered their claims to fame: Mr. Orchowsky, the butcher on Grand Avenue, had a nephew named Artie Shaw. (They all nodded and whispered in agreement.)

In those days, they lamented, nothing was wasted. The butcher threw in free bones. But it was not just the free bones they yearned for. The prices of meat were lower then: fifteen cents a pound for chicken, twenty-three cents a pound for shoulder steak, beef liver fell someplace in between at eighteen cents a pound, and if you really wanted to get fancy, calves' liver was the highest. All of the kosher meat markets also had charge accounts, one butcher's son, Sam Teitelman recalled, so many butchers provided food for poor families. Not only that, Aaron Kahn, another butcher's son added, but they used to deliver—by horse and wagon and by sled, or even by baby carriage. The younger Kahn, who spotted several of his father's customers in the first few rows of the audience alone, began testing his memory by calling out their assigned numbers and street addresses.

The butchers re-emerged that evening as men with broad shoulders and powerful arms who did an almost heroic job with long hours and "without many thanks." For Aaron Kahn's father, who opened his own shop on Columbus Avenue (in the Hill) in 1925 when he was seventeen, Friday, before the Sabbath, was the only half-day of the work week, from four o'clock in the morning until two in the afternoon. Almost 'olden-times' personal caterers, they cared for their customers generously. And they took pride in their pickling—the tongues and the corned beef—each butcher had a slightly different brine.

This solicitousness, it seems, grew as much from a fierce business drive as from the butchers' kindness. Sheila Caplan, whose father Harry Miller had a shop on Legion Avenue where eight other butcher shops and at least three chicken markets plied their trade, remembers the competition as being so great that each new shop was a cause for concern. There was a man who came into the neighborhood for a short time, she remembered, a man whom Caplan dubbed

Mr. Fancy-Cuts. Everyone feared Fancy-Cuts. "Here's a man, they all thought, who knows how to cut the meat fancy, he's going to take away all the customers." Unbeknownst to Caplan, the son of Mr. Fancy-Cuts himself, accountant Sam Teitelman, had been sitting two chairs away from her all evening. The Teitelmans, whose family name was synonymous with the kosher meat business, opened shop on Legion Avenue and then moved in the early 1930s to Whalley Avenue, eventually to the building next to Chuck's, which now houses the Hadassah Thrift Shop.

Mr. Fancy-Cuts or no Mr. Fancy-Cuts, Caplan said, her father had to put in extra effort to attract business—to offset her "mouthy," cranky grandfather who scared away customers—and so he would call people on the telephone for business.

"Hi, it's the butcher calling. Do you need anything? I'm coming to the neighborhood," he would say.

"You know, Harry, go to Ticotsky's [Bakery], and get me a dozen rolls," a customer would respond.

"Okay," he would say. "Anything else?"

"You know, go to Moshe Greenberg's. I could use some lettuce too. Pick me out a nice head of lettuce."

And my father would say, "Okay, I'll do that for you. Anything from the butcher?"

"No. Not this time, Harry, just the bread and the lettuce."

Caplan waited for the crowd to stop laughing. "Today we don't have any Harry Millers and we don't have any Kahns," she said seriously. "You know why we don't have any kosher butchers? Because it's such a hard, hard way to make a living. It was just a back-breaking job." If Catholics were kosher, Caplan suggested and the crowd consented, these butchers would have been sainted long ago.

The evening ended with coffee and, not liver and onions, but chocolate chip cookies and still more comments about the missed butchers: "Most of them died at early ages." "His shop was open seven days a week and he worked all night long before holidays because we didn't have where to keep it [the meat]." "For the amount of work he put in, he wasn't rewarded enough by his customers."

Only bicycle man Sydney Bruskin saw fit, on this evening of nostalgia, to rehash a fine point of history (that others seemed reluc-

tant to discuss) by bringing up a controversy that took place almost sixty years ago. The Star Market, which employed twenty-two butchers in its heyday, was the object of some opposition when it first opened on Oak Street. Exactly where did its meat come from, Bruskin asked the crowd. And why had the rabbi once denied it the kosher label?

As Bruskin understands it, he later said, the Star Market, run by a Mr. Rosen, came in from New York and cut prices. Rosen, coincidentally, did not belong to the Hebrew Butchers' Association of New Haven, which charged membership dues of fifteen dollars (a hefty amount in 1925) and seemed unofficially to dictate prices among the city's many kosher meat markets. Maybe Rosen didn't belong to the association, Bruskin speculates, because it picked its own *shochtim* (ritual slaughterers) and its own inspectors. Or maybe he didn't belong because he felt that the association wouldn't give him a license because he was cutting prices.

During the Depression, Bruskin says,

> ...a lot of women felt that they wanted kosher, yet if they could save a few pennies [by shopping at the Star Market] they were going to do it. As far as they were concerned it was kosher enough. ...This man got his meat from New York and he felt he didn't have to be a member of the association, yet he was kosher. Recently I found out that they had a court case ...and the man was acquitted. There is a Connecticut law that if you say it's kosher it has to be kosher and there are certain standards they use. And the judge felt that Rosen covered everything, so everybody beat a path to his door after that....

including Bruskin's family. When the Star Market came in, Bruskin's father said, "You go over there and you can buy meat for five cents a pound cheaper. But make sure nobody sees you go in there." Unlike the Alperts, Mr. Rosen was *not* a customer of Bruskin the barber.

The trial of Mr. Rosen of the Star Market was big news in its day. Reported on the front page of the *New Haven Times* of April 8, 1932 (a Friday and usually not a slow day for news), the article tells of an emotional courtroom scene in which Rabbi Isaac Grossman,

Sterling research scholar in Semitic languages at Yale University, gave a lengthy and ebullient testimony on kosher laws, in defense of Rosen, and was then

> ...carried almost on the shoulders of excited women; and when he repaired after the trial to Rosen's store on Oak Street, he was greeted with handshakes, kisses, and applause. In fact no such reception was ever seen in Oak street, no such demonstration, as Rosen received from thankful customers. They flooded the meat market, bought meat that they had no intention of getting, stood on the street in front of his store for a block distance and in little groups discussed the merits of the case.

These same excited men and women, "sympathizers of Rosen," tried to carry off Michael J. Quinn, the defending attorney, on their shoulders, but had to settle, the reporter wrote, with "kissing his hands." And so went that "chapter," as Bruskin would say.

It's a *shmoozing* kind of morning at Chuck's on a Saturday at ten o'clock. The restaurant is half full, and compared to the chatty crowd that gathers for a weekday lunch, it's quiet and relaxed. The sounds coming from the floor are low and rumbling and constant. A bunch of tall yellow mums are stuffed unceremoniously into a plastic white vase at the Lunchette's entrance. Chuck's wife, Marge, a "healthy" woman with medium red hair, sporting a chain-link gold bracelet, is wearing a bright purple jacket. She greets a family whose son is in from college and sits down with them for coffee at a table near the register. She stacks three empty little containers of half-and-half in front of her.

Chuck, glasses foggy, steps out from behind the grill for his break. Taking a seat two tables away from Marge, he carries on a loud conversation with the father in Marge's group. They're gossiping about a local businessman who made good in Miami, and how many numbers they hit on the lottery. One of the waitresses calls in an order for two rice puddings with whipped cream, and Marge goes behind the counter and gets out a big silver canister. Mr. Byrd,

a slight, graceful black man who just celebrated his ninetieth birthday, stands next to Marge wiping down the counter. He is wearing a red and white cap with the words "I'm the boss."

The Saturday morning regulars have begun to roll in, a crowd, Sydney Bruskin says, that is mostly white Jewish men without their wives. They don't stay more than an hour, taking seats at the counter—on the swivel stools—or at the tables near the grill and they talk shop: how's your wife, your mother-in-law, your grandson, where are you going on vacation, who's been sick? "It's more or less a habit with me. It's not just the food, it's the sociability. You just assume that certain people are going to be there," says Bruskin, who goes on Saturdays for his soft scrambled eggs ("in less than one minute Chuck's got 'em out on the counter") and two cups of coffee. Those certain people, who you can bet will show, are people like Irving, a retired plumber; another Sid; Jewish bachelor Howard; and "Red," who used to play basketball and is still interested, especially in local sports.

There are a few old-timers who hang in there, Bruskin says, but times have changed at Chuck's. Before television became evening entertainment, people would meet at Chuck's. Though business is still very good at the restaurant, there are now fewer Jewish customers, and more of the "black trade," and more folks on their way home from church ordering pastrami. At Christmas time, a two-foot tinselly tree stands comfortably in the corner near the grill, announcing the owners' intentions. During Passover, one can order bread or matzo. Chuck's does a fair amount of take-out: the phone rings a lot for delivery of dozens of sandwiches to offices, and they seem to have a tie-in to the courts downtown.

Chuck is now quietly drinking his coffee and the waitresses are taking up the slack. They're discussing their supply of danishes and jelly, which much to their chagrin, is gone. "None," says Winnie. "When I say none, it's none." Trudy, wearing glasses and a shag hairdo, decides to ignore her. "I haven't even slept yet and *I'm* in a good mood. Coffee and a nice chocolate milk." She croons out her order. She retrieves two sodas from the counter, and deposits one on the table of a white-haired gentleman smoking a cigarette and

reading the *New York Post*. As she leaves his table, she pulls her sweater more closely around her brown uniform.

Much of the history of old Jewish New Haven as it is remembered today is the story of Jewish Oak Street starting with the arrival of the Eastern European and Russian Jews. Since the German and Irish immigration beginning in the 1830s, Oak Street, a commercial road of a little over a mile, served as immigrants' (low-rent) quarters. The Eastern European and Russian Jews who began flooding into the city around the turn of the century were no exception. In their turn they, and the large number of Italians who accompanied them, took up residence on Oak Street. Much, much later, starting in the 1950s, many of the Jews disappeared to larger houses in the suburbs, and the city made a brave—but many say insensitive—attempt at urban redevelopment. And by the mid-1970s, as the neighborhood sank into decline, cut off from the city by the massive new Richard Lee (or Oak Street) Connector, linking the city to the superhighways, the last of the shops and synagogues and kosher meat markets had disappeared. The Russian Bath, on Oak Street, where for a penny or two, the Jewish men got a bar of soap and a towel and a full night's companionship—including schnapps, cards, cots, and delicatessen—was long gone.

When Yale student Sinclair Lewis ventured beyond the college campus to Oak Street in about 1905, he described it (eventually in the short story "Young Man Axelbrod") as "a place of low shops, smoky lights, and alley mouths," where one found "kosher signs and advertisements in Russian letters, shawled women and bearded rabbis." "My imagination says that the only difference between Legion Avenue and the center of a town in a *shtetl* in Europe," muses Sam Teitelman, "was that on Legion Avenue they had paved roads and they had running water." (In 1927 the western part of Oak Street was renamed Legion Avenue to honor the World War I veterans.)

The senior Teitelmans arrived in this country from the Ukraine, through Cuba, after the First World War. Soon after settling in New Haven, Sam's father, Abraham, moved his butcher shop to Legion Avenue. Sam remembers it, in the 1920s, as a "dramatic"

neighborhood of hard-working immigrants. Most of them—Italians, Polish, Ukrainians, Greeks, Russians, Chinese, Irish, lots of Catholics, and many, many Jews—lived in tenements (without tubs) on four or five commercial avenues (including Oak Street) and on the more residential side streets. Day, Orchard, Vernon, Ward, Asylum, and Elliott Streets, all "off Legion Avenue," were packed with predominantly Jewish residents. Eight in a family was common, as was two or more to a bed.

If anything brought the Jews together when they started out on Oak Street, besides religion, language (Yiddish), and neighborhood, it was their common drive to become Americans. This meant improving—with spit and a prayer—on the meager lot they had just left in the old country. Louis Bruskin, who came to Connecticut from Russia in 1909 and who owned a barber shop on Oak Street, was typical of his generation, his son Sydney says. When he got to this country, he had six dollars. "Actually, there's a little side story there," says Bruskin, who collects these stories in his own personal archives.

> When he left Russia, he had four dollars with him. The boat stopped in Liverpool, he bought scissors and a razor for two dollars. On the ship, which was a three-week voyage, he gave haircuts and shaves for five and ten cents. (And if the passenger didn't have anything he didn't charge him anything.) So when he got to America he had six dollars now plus those two utensils. So that was his fortune when he came here. It was unknown to ask for charity. Even a Jewish charity. We just...bootstraps. We picked ourselves up.

But even years after making a solid living in his shop on Oak Street, Bruskin the barber had the job of making ends meet. He couldn't have put it more plainly when he asked his Oak Street friend Sam Goodman, the dairy man, the simple question, "How's business?" In Yiddish, though, Bruskin points out, the expression would go "*Nu, Sam, haint mir essen anderem oder unserem*?" which takes on a slightly different tone, something closer to "So, Sam, today are we eating somebody else's or our own?" To eat, then, was to live.

Sometimes history and nostalgia belong together—like bagels and lox, pastrami and rye. Economic necessity, life dictated by the need to eat, to survive, is now a warm memory, of mom and pop businesses with homes in the back room, of wall-to-wall people shopping on Oak Street and Legion Avenue on Saturday night at 11:30 after Sabbath, of pushcarts and pickles, of coal for the winter's furnace and ice shavings in the summertime from the iceman, of hot crusty rolls at three in the morning from Ticotsky's Bakery. But precious few care to remember that they hid the fact that they came from Oak Street *when they lived there*. Most of those who lived on Oak Street as children now brag about it, and they savor its memory, with a mixture of pride and nostalgia, as a family place. Some have even made painstaking efforts to keep those blocks alive—through photographs, personal and business documents, lectures, and exhibits.

With notes about Oak Street and Legion Avenue filling dozens of sheets of legal-size paper, Sherman Kramer is one of those people. "Today's event is tomorrow's history," is an expression he likes. Kramer grew up on Elliott Street, a block and a half from Legion Avenue, and started printing in his parents' basement as a hobby when he was fifteen, then as a business when he returned from service in World War II. Kramer, sometimes with the help of his 95-year-old mother, can recreate a detailed street map, with special attention to the businesses of the three or four block area that was his world from 1926 until 1954, when he and his wife Sally left the city for suburban Orange.

Kramer knows, for instance, where to place Max Wax the baloney maker on Oak Street, and Barney Brayer and his brother-in-law Levine's meat market, with Mrs. Weiss in the back alley with her *shochet*, who would kill the chickens and pluck them ('chicken flickers' in those days). Kramer can point out, on Oak Street, the I. Newman Corset Company, Alperts' Meat Market (of Chuck's family), and the New York Bagel Company (direct ancestor of Lender's Bagels, which can be seen in supermarket freezers across the country—even in Nebraska, which doesn't know from bagels). He also

knows that Lazaroth was the last blacksmith in the Legion Avenue neighborhood (on Orchard Street) and that an old Jewish lady named Lakey had a grocery on Legion Avenue, which later became Hy's Appetizers, then Meier's M & T Delicatessen, and is now on Whalley Avenue in Westville.

He can tell you that on Legion Avenue and Howe Street there was the New York Meat Market, then Harry Kaplowitz's Candy Store, selling just candy and soda ("and they made a living"), then Einhorn the tailor, then a saloon on the corner of Day and Legion which later became Fox's Delicatessen (who later went "up" to Whalley Avenue). And at 174 Legion Avenue, where Fox's used to sell their smoked fish and other delicatessen, Kramer, after returning from the war in 1945, rented the store, whose rear was occupied by Sam Moslowitz's live chicken market, for his print shop.

Kramer's print shop moved to West Haven in 1975, but not by choice. And this is where the story of Oak Street and Legion Avenue becomes many stories, depending on whom you talk to. For the city of New Haven and then Mayor Richard Lee, it was the attempt to revitalize a blighted neighborhood, coupled with the growth of the superhighways in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet the events leading up to that neighborhood's "redevelopment" meant, for the area's residents and businessmen, the slow and painful destruction of a place where they and their *landsleit* had lived and worked for close to eight decades.

For the Jews, the move from Oak Street to the outer city and suburbs meant gaining an American identity—and one of prosperity and assimilation—but losing some of the religious, cultural, and social glue that bound them together in the first place. Bruskin, whose bicycle store on Chapel Street in downtown New Haven was not affected by the "redevelopment," says that even before the city's "relocation and demolition," people had started to drift out of the Oak Street neighborhood.

> The Jews wanted to get out themselves—no question about it. They felt it was just a step up, so there was no thought of it. Friends moved away and you moved away. Economically things got better. So it was just a natural thing. Even if the state had not built

> the connector, we would have been out of there before long. Because as other immigrant groups came in, they started to occupy it and then there was a certain amount of friction between some of the ethnic groups. For one thing it was economic—the haves and the have nots. There was a little bit of crime coming in....And also the buildings themselves, the houses were tenement houses mostly... [with] a coal stove instead of oil heat...So then people thought, well, we can have a bigger house and in a neighborhood where more of our friends are, with more prestige.

Bruskin went back to Oak Street just before they tore everything down, on a Sunday morning with a camera and the distinct feeling, he says, that "here history is going." He roamed from one end of Oak Street to the other, snapping pictures of the places he had grown up around—the Russian Bath, the tenement house where he lived at 124 Sylvan Avenue (still standing), and Club Knickerbocker, a speakeasy and then a nightclub patronized by Yale students.

Kramer says his parents, who lived a block and a half off Legion Avenue when redevelopment started, ended up selling their property at a depressed price. Others fared still worse.

> I can think of a little Italian man, Mendillo, who moved over on the Boulevard [now at the far western end of the Oak Street Connector]. That man who lived a block and a half off the Avenue, he died of a broken heart. He bought a little house way up on the Boulevard, he couldn't get up to the neighborhood. It was within a couple of blocks [Legion Avenue]. You're able to walk, you do your shopping, you do your *shmoozing*. It was neighborhood. You go in to the butcher in the afternoon just to talk to him, or the shoemaker. It's like a little hick town.

Hidden in this thicket of concrete progress is a memorial to the Legion Avenue neighborhood that once flourished here, a small plaque that was two years in the placing. Catercorner to a receiving area for the Yale–New Haven Hospital and in full view of a ramp leading from the hospital's "air-rights" parking garage, the one-foot square sign, at eye level but hardly noticeable, reads:

> This plaque honors and perpetuates the memory of a vibrant business community known as The Legion Avenue Business Association and the residents of this area who made Legion Avenue a hospitable and vital part of our great city. Biagio DiLieto, Mayor, City of New Haven, January 1988.

Traffic zooms past the plaque en route to the ramp for the highway, and under the small shopping arcade where the memorial makes its home, pedestrians with take-out coffee hurry by it to their hospital jobs.

Even before redevelopment pushed the last businesses off Legion Avenue, the Jewish population in New Haven had begun to shift. In a westward—and what many say was a geographically "natural" —progression, the Jews moved a short distance from Oak Street up Whalley Avenue in the 1930s, and into the nearby neighborhood of Beaver Hills, with their businesses and homes. Many went further still, on into Westville and the outlying suburbs. Colony Road, in the heart of Beaver Hills, was called "Mortgage Way" in the 1930s and was settled by up-and-coming younger Jews.

Whalley Avenue, on the edge of Beaver Hills, was primarily a residential neighborhood then, dominated by the Irish and the Yankees. (Whalley Avenue was named for Edward Whalley, a relative of Oliver Cromwell, one of the judges in the High Court of Justice who had condemned Charles I to death and who later escaped to New England in 1661.) In this "Americanized," second-generation neighborhood, a fellow like Sam Teitelman, the butcher Abraham Teitelman's son, who came from Legion Avenue, felt like a foreigner. A short, solid, square man with gray hair, a broad, open face and large blue eyes, it's not hard to imagine him wearing the white coat of his father's trade. But Teitelman is an accountant by profession—and every bit the expert on Whalley Avenue in the 1930s.

In about 1933, Sam Teitelman's father had the first kosher meat market on Whalley Avenue. Teitelman's market first occupied a shop across the street from Chuck's present location. The Teitelmans moved into the first floor of their new home, the building where the

Hadassah Thrift Shop now operates. They had tenants on the second floor. Eventually, the Teitelmans converted the first floor of their home to commercial property, and the meat market moved in on the street level. Though the family went upstairs to the second floor, Sam remembers living mostly in the very large kitchen behind the store. When the Teitelmans moved in, Sam recalls that it was a block with three stores: a general grocery (Garston), Nodelman's tailor shop (a store all of ten-feet-wide by twenty-five-feet-long), and a store in between. Across the street was a whole row of businesses including Gold's Delicatessen, Civitelli's Produce, and Graziuso's Shoe Repair. "Whalley Avenue was like moving into a strange country," Sam Teitelman remembers. Gone was the Yiddish, the large immigrant families, and the overcrowded tenements of the old neighborhood.

Though the Teitelmans may have been among the first Jews to open shop on Whalley Avenue, many from the old neighborhoods had the same idea. In the 1930s, Teitelman says, as the properties in the old neighborhoods began to deteriorate, and as the Jews gained some upward mobility, they began to move from the Hill to the Teitelmans' neighborhood. Even a decade earlier, Whalley Avenue, where two of the city's largest mansions stood, had begun to absorb the city's growing population. A piece of the Kenna estate (owned by the president of Marlin Firearms), just a few blocks from the Teitelmans and a sledding spot for neighborhood kids was bought by St. Brendan's Church and divided into lots for housing. Another "residential landmark" farther out Whalley Avenue, the twenty-two-room Hubinger mansion (the family was in the starch business) was bought in 1936 by Adolph Perlroth and torn down in 1939 to build apartments.

The block was developed commercially starting shortly after World War II, and if ever there was a golden age on Whalley Avenue, it was in the 1950s, when the economy was booming in the city and in the nation. A middle-class barometer of the downtown climate, Whalley Avenue had attractions that drew people from all parts of the city and from the surrounding neighborhood as well. Down the street from Chuck's, the Whalley Avenue Theater, which brought out all the locals, was owned by Maurice Bailey, a successful business-

man who lived in Beaver Hills. Bailey, who owned a small empire, including the Shubert Theater—the stop before Broadway—helped build the new B'nai Jacob Synagogue in the early 1960s and the Woodbridge Country Club in that affluent suburb.

As a place to do business, Whalley Avenue attracted the humble entrepreneur as well as the titan. In 1955, the year after Chuck's Lunchette opened for business, the Price and Lee *City Directory* lists no fewer than twenty businesses—including four meat markets and delicatessens, for both sides of the street—on the block where Chuck's still serves its famous towering sandwiches. Before people had the money—or the custom—of eating out, a delicatessen was a retail market without "sit-down." When the next, more affluent generation fell in love with eating out, in the 1950s, a delicatessen had turned into something entirely different. Sam Teitelman's father's shop ultimately became White's Delicatessen, which went out of business in 1976.

In that decade of expansion when business boomed on Whalley Avenue, sandwiches bulged inside Chuck's Lunchette. Those were the days when people *ate*. They went to dinner and then went dancing. They went to the movies in the evening and then grabbed a sandwich—a midnight snack—and browsed through the newspaper at Chuck's. On the weekends especially, people would go there until closing time, one or two in the morning. Anyone who has been a steady customer of Chuck's for the past four decades can tell you that very little has changed (including the menu and the clientele), except the closing time, the decor, and the prices. That steadfastness is, in fact, probably the major reason that Chuck's, of the four meat market/delicatessens and other restaurants (like Al's across the street) remains on this block. That steadfastness and, of course, the blintzes, the corned beef, the pastrami, and the pickles.

"There's no way the pickles don't come from New York," says Mark Bittman, a food writer and former editor of *Cook's* magazine, as he flips thinly sliced potatoes in a pan over a gas flame. A worn copy of *The Art of Jewish Cooking* by Jennie Grossinger is cracked open on his kitchen table. "Cause you can't get a pickle that good anywhere

else in Connecticut. At least *I* haven't had one." Bittman says that in a time when going out to eat is a "dining experience," eating at Chuck's, that Jewish–American hybrid, is still eating at a restaurant with a capital 'R.' Chuck's is where you go to eat with your family. The place is not Yuppie or trendy.

Anyone who has held one of his menus can tell you that. It is a clear-plastic-covered, four-page, cream-colored document (with medium brown print), sixteen inches high, and about the same in girth, revealing a modest list of well over one hundred items. The front of this book is deceivingly simple. In a sixties-style cursive script it announces "Chuck's Dinner Menu." But open it up and let the poor decision-maker beware. Among the main categories you can choose from are "Juices and Fruits" (to start), "Salads and Cold Platters," "Side Orders," "Dairy Dishes," "Cold Beet Borscht," "Eggs and Omelettes," "Chuck and Marge's Special Suggestions" (dinners), "Order by Number" (sandwiches), "Griddle Cakes, Toast and Cereals," "Egg Sandwiches," "Texas Roundup," "Fish Sandwiches," "Cheese Sandwiches," (Just Plain) "Sandwiches," "Chuck's Famous Combination Sandwiches," "From Our Dessert Counter," and "Beverages."

Slipped into the almost Chinese-style "Order-by-Number" category is a group of sandwiches named after glitzy 1950s Miami Beach hotels: the Americana, the Saxony, the Seville, the Nautilus, the San Souci, the Fountainbleu, the Algiers, the Versailles, the Seacomber, the Eden Roc, and the Deauville. Yet with all of these categories, it becomes apparent that we are seeing the same characters under different disguises. If you throw a little Swiss onto some turkey, you get the Saxony—you could also probably order a plain turkey sandwich, ask for cheese on the top, and save yourself a buck. Chuck knows how important it is to have the right name.

Chuck recommends more on your plate when you can't quite decide between two meats: a turkey *and* tongue sandwich is in his repertoire, as is a corned beef *and* pastrami. After all, why should you settle for just one? Dessert can bring a little something to stick to your ribs: rice pudding or chocolate pudding, or a buttered roll, a toasted English or a Danish Pastry (Plain), or a piece of cream pie. There are a few things that you just can't get away from at Chuck's:

coleslaw and potato salad, for starters. And then what everybody's Jewish grandmother tries to move at her kitchen table: liver (chopped, sautéed, or broiled), usually with onions, lox, corned beef, pastrami, with some eggs and cheese for ballast. Concessions to the regular American palate are bacon and french fries (all over the place), baked clams, fried shrimp, and chicken, and Thursday's special, the New England Boiled Dinner.

Under minimal scrutiny, Chuck's fare could possibly pass for just plain American diner food if it weren't for that most telling of entrees, and that, says Bittman, which separates the men from the boys: tongue. "You can get decent pastrami a lot of places in Connecticut, but you can't go into restaurants and order tongue. And tongue is a real throwback." If it weren't for the tongue, in fact, people might well not notice that bacon nestles comfortably alongside pastrami, and that ham rubs shoulders with chopped liver.

Most of Chuck's customers don't seem to pay a bit of attention to the menu. They know what they want before they walk in the door. They'll have the same thing they had yesterday for breakfast or lunch. Sometimes, even if they don't know what they're ordering, the waitress will fill in the blank for them. Irving Perlmutter, a New Haven lawyer, gets a Reuben. Bittman likes the corned beef, because he grew up eating it—and now he never does. The couple in the breakfast booth will have their 'usual' (Chuck shouts out their order from his twenty-foot distance behind the grill—and they nod in agreement—before the waitress can even approach their table).

Nobody needs a menu at all at Chuck's on a Thursday night, "Maid's Night Out," when corned beef and cabbage is served. The parking lot is packed and a small crowd gathers inside the restaurant's double glass front doors waiting for tables. Well-groomed older couples, filled out (but not too much), hover over plates of the steaming "boiled dinners." "Nobody gets the pastrami anymore," one diner says. "They're going for the lower-fat meats now."

Chuck is at the grill wearing brown pants and an off-white shirt. His glasses are steamed up as he limps out of the kitchen. On his way to the rest rooms at the back of the restaurant he stops to say hello to a red-headed one-year-old whose mother and grandmother have just gotten their three-inch-high turkey sandwiches with Rus-

sian. "Can you clap hands," he asks her, stooping down to show the child how its done. A few kids jump around the tables near the counter, eating bites of their French toast between spins on the stools. People are moving their mouths—chewing, smoking, singing, and bantering. But if they stay half an hour to wolf down their meal, it's a lot. They're on their way to someplace, and have stopped to grab a quick bite, before the theater or a movie, or between work and an evening meeting. And when you look around, you can't help but notice that many of these people know each other. Yet in a restaurant that was once a neighborhood gathering spot, hardly a neighborhood face can be seen.

What happened to Oak Street, the physical demolition of the old Jewish neighborhood, and with it the demise of the "ghetto" way of life, has been underway—with a different twist—on Whalley Avenue. Whalley Avenue's position as a center of Jewish eating, food shopping—and social life—has dwindled since the disappearance of the neighborhood clientele, and so have all of its delicatessens, kosher meat markets, and kosher bakeries. In 1963, Al's ("Home of the Pastrami Special" and Chuck's competition across the street) went; in 1976, White's Delicatessen, which originally opened on Oak Street in 1929 and moved to Whalley Avenue in 1960, sold its fixtures and canned goods and closed up shop. In fact, of all the kosher and kosher-style shops once peddling their wares on that Whalley Avenue block between Carmel and Winthrop Streets, only Chuck's remains. And while it is true that there are many Jewish-owned businesses on Whalley Avenue, including such established ones as Brandfon Motors and McClenning Furs, none but Chuck's is a family business in the tradition of the butchers and bakers of Oak Street.

Chuck's is an "institution," as its owners claim, and because of that, people who ordinarily wouldn't dare venture into town or to Whalley Avenue—for other reasons—will still come into the city specifically to go to Chuck's, but with some reluctance. Although Chuck himself says he's been "lucky" that he's only been held up once in his almost forty years on Whalley Avenue (they walked off with the cash register), everyone knows that the tenor of the neigh-

borhood, which includes as a resident New Haven's Mayor John Daniels, has changed. The mayor, who used to go to Chuck's on weekends for breakfast, lives not far from the restaurant in alderwoman Elaine Braffman's Beaver Hills ward, which borders Whalley Avenue and includes Chuck's. The top concern of her constituents, who live in what Braffman calls a "well-integrated" neighborhood, including "corporates, cerebrals, and those on public assistance," is drug-related crime.

When Oak Street became history, the Whalley Avenue neighborhood, in many ways, became the heart and soul—and perhaps the belly—of old Jewish New Haven. It was home to many of the transplanted Jewish delicatessens and bakeries from Oak Street and Legion Avenue. Yet with those gathering places now gone, much of what remains of the Jewish identity of the avenue today seems to be, with the exception of Chuck's and the fund-raising Jewish Federation, a memorial to the past—the Mishkan Israel Cemetery, the Holocaust Memorial, and the Jewish Community Center's senior program. After a bitter fight among its members, the Jewish Community Center made the decision to move out of the city to suburban Woodbridge, following its clientele. But Chuck's Lunchette is holding on. Chuck has no plans to retire, or so he says, but when he does, it will truly be the "end of an era" in the old Jewish history of New Haven.

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This was a corner room on the third floor at the Jewish Home for the Aged in 1946, it was later converted to the Head Nurse's office. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)



Dining room in the basement of the Jewish Home for the Aged, 1940. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

Women and Leadership

The Role of Women Leaders of the New Haven Jewish Home for the Aged 1908–1938

by Miriam Parker

IN THE LAST DECADES of the nineteenth century, the problems of the elderly in the United States intensified.[1] There was a 5.3% increase in the numbers of elderly poor due primarily to the avalanche of European immigration during that time period.[2]

Simultaneously, in cities, both large and small, such as New York, Scranton, and New Haven, a new role was being envisioned for women; they were to oversee the welfare of the underprivileged and ultimately their standards of care.[3] These "social feminists" plunged into a multitude of problems and developed new instruments of feminine influence to deal with them.[4]

The New Haven Jewish Home for the Aged was founded in 1914 by a progressive women's social service organization, the Sisters of Zion. These women recognized the Jewish community's lack of provision for the plight of New Haven's elderly, poor, homeless Jews whose needs could not be met at Springside, the municipal poorhouse, work farm, and piggery.[5] These needs included kosher meals, prayer services, and the companionship of fellow immigrant Jews.[6] After debating the alternatives (including rejecting the idea of a joint home for children and elderly), the Sisters of Zion voted to use their entire treasury of $300 to form a corporation, and start a fund to acquire a building to begin operations.[7] The Jewish Home for the Aged was officially opened in 1916. Within a year, because

of the growth of a waiting list, the women purchased an adjoining property for the construction of a new building.

Women continued their role of leadership of this social welfare organization from 1914 through the twenties when their presence on the Board of Directors began to diminish. By November, 1989 there were 40 men and only 6 women on the Board of the Jewish Home. How can this change in leadership be explained?

The years between 1908 and 1938 were filled with historic, economic and political change. From 1880 to 1920, industrialization lured native and immigrant alike, with the promise of a new job start, to the foundries, factories and mills which had begun to dot the American countryside.[8] The urban population increased threefold, from 15 million in 1890 to 45 million in 1910.[9] In the period between 1900 and 1910 alone, nine million immigrants entered the United States—mainly from southern and eastern Europe.[10] America was quickly becoming a new nation; one which was industrialized, urban and ethnically diverse.[11]

The United States also emerged as an international power at the turn of the century and had already begun to compete with Europe for new Pacific trade outlets, Samoa and Hawaii, which needed therefore to be protected.[12] Acquiring the right to construct the Panama Canal, which would be owned by Panama but under American control, forecasted the federal government's willingness to intervene in the affairs of other nations to the south in order to establish hemispheric dominance and protect investments.[13]

America's becoming an economic power did not occur without the infliction of pain on the many. The Populist movement of the 1890s arose out of the grievances of agrarians who attacked the economic system which benefited big business, railroad and banking interests.[14] Hofstadter, in *The Age of Reform*, adds a darker side to the populists. He describes their crusade to relieve the plight of the farmer as not only being aimed against finance and business, but also against urbanism. According to Hofstadter, there were also elements of anti-intellectualism, and anti-Semitism.

The burgeoning of powerful industry and banking, coupled with America's outworn philosophy of hands-off individualism, created "an industrial order in which 5% of the population owned nearly half the nation's property while more than one third of it's 76 million people lived below the poverty line."[15] The living conditions were as bad as the working conditions, with a bewildering number of people—mainly immigrants—living in wretched, disease infested tenements.[16]

The cities were in no way prepared to cope with the massive growth of the population. This environment allowed the forces of reform to gather momentum. A multifaceted coalition of reformers that included insurgent intellectuals, university professors, women activists, farmers and laborers, investigative reporters and middle class business and professional men operated at the local state and national levels of government and society.[17] These uncoordinated efforts at reform, between 1900 and 1920, came to be known as the Progressive movement.[18] Pluralistic in nature, the progressive reformers sought a variety of goals: political reforms such as the initiative, referendum, recall, and the destruction of urban political machines and corruption; economic reforms, such as the regulation of public utilities and the curtailment of corporate power; social reforms such as the regulation of child and woman labor, amelioration of the lot of the urban poor, housing laws and women's vote.[19] Women, such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and Lillian Wald, were at the forefront of these reforms.

The establishment of the Jewish Home for the Aged in New Haven was the result of women's recognition of the need for social reform for care of the elderly in that city.

The Sisters of Zion, a progressive women's social service organization promoted the establishment of the Jewish Home. The Sisters of Zion was formed in 1908 to aid the Jewish poor in New Haven, and originally the women divided their attention between young and old alike.[20] They raised funds from the families in the New Haven Jewish community and gave direct aid to those in need. Gradually the women began to notice that elderly, poor, immigrant Jews were ex-

periencing severe problems. Many had no families to care for them and were relegated to Springside, the New Haven Poorhouse. The elderly indigent Jews living in the poorhouse could not observe dietary laws, participate in prayer services, or celebrate Jewish holidays.

Two women in particular stand out for their unusual leadership and work for the Home. Deborah Gladstone Abrams and Lena Steinberg, two of the young women who organized the Sisters of Zion, went to Springside to visit the elderly and to discuss the problems the residents were experiencing.[21] These two women were convinced that the Jewish community needed to provide a home for aged Jews and persuaded the Sisters of Zion to use their entire treasury to start a fund to acquire a building, form a corporation, and seek local community and rabbinic support.[22]

Lena Steinberg and Deborah Gladstone Abrams remained active and continued to be the acknowledged leaders in the formation and management of the Home. Mrs. Steinberg was a forceful and charming woman who was able to attract people and motivate them to work.[23] She became the first President of the Jewish Home in 1915 and was reelected annually until 1925, when her husband's business took them away from New Haven for six years.[24] When they returned again to New Haven in 1932, Mrs. Steinberg was again back in the position of President and served until 1937 when Mr. Abraham Molstein was elected to that position, which he held until 1950.

Deborah Gladstone Abrams' relationship with the Home lasted for more than 45 years. She was the first financial secretary of the Home from the start of the organization until 1926 when she succeeded Mrs. Steinberg as President. In 1928, Mrs. Abrams became Matron of the Home and in 1929, she was named Supervisor. She had made the classic move from volunteer to professional paid worker. The minutes of the Board of Directors note that Mrs. Abrams attended conferences sponsored by the National Conference of Social Work in Boston and Washington.[25] Mrs. Abrams remained in this principal staff position until her resignation in 1956. She was the main force in management and fundraising at the Home, chairing all such projects throughout her tenure.[26]

In 1933, the Board formed a new auxiliary organization called the Junior League. The object of the organization was "to promote the good and welfare of the Jewish Home for the Aged by training future leaders to carry on the work of the parent organization by spreading the Gospel of the Home throughout the community and by personal contacts with the Home Inmates."[27] Mrs. Abrams, as reported in the minutes of the March 3, 1936 meeting of the league, appealed to the young members to carry on this work which was formerly done by founding members, since lost through death or illness.[28] Apparently, prior to 1933, the founding women activists were having a difficult time recruiting new women, while more and more men were interested in becoming board members.[29] What happened ?

Scholars of history have argued about who the progressives were, but they did agree that the progressives did not make fundamental changes in American institutions.[30] Rather, they moderately overhauled the evolving economic and political systems. While women became progressives and pacifists in the years between 1890 and 1920, serving in the vanguard of those struggling for economic and social justice and international peace, historians have acknowledged these women with little more than a cursory nod. One well known example is Jane Addams, the humanitarian reformer, whose settlement house work made her an untiring foe of political corruption and economic exploitation.[31] Although historians usually include women's winning the vote as a major accomplishment of the progressive era, most have focused on males, whether as business, professional, or political elites or as working class voters [32].

The theoretical framework of Richard Hofstadter in *The Age of Reform* suggests that progressive leaders were middle class, educated professionals who were not threatened by industrialism but by a loss of status. He stated that "whenever an important change takes place in modern society, large sections of intellectuals, the professionals and opinion making classes, see the drift of events and throw their weight on the side of what they feel is progress and reform."[33] Hofstadter played down the role of economic factors in individual

and group motivation. He believed status anxiety prompted these people to become reformers and tended therefore to make their efforts ineffective in the long run.[34]

In contrast, Gabriel Kolko, contends "that the period from approximately 1900 until the United States intervention in the war, labeled the 'progressive' era by virtually all historians, was really an era of conservatism. Moreover, the triumph of conservatism...was not the result of impersonal, mechanistic necessity but the conscious needs and decisions of specific men and institutions."[35] According to Kolko, Progressivism was a movement that operated on the assumption that satisfying the general welfare of the community could be best served by satisfying the needs of business.[36] During the first two decades of the twentieth century, corporate leaders turned to government to control competition and to prevent the possibility of a formal political democracy that might actually lead to distribution of wealth.[37]

Two other scholars, Samuel Hays and Robert H. P. Wiebe, suggested that the Progressives were members of a newly emergent social class possessed of new techniques of scientific expertise and organizational know-how.[38] Wiebe referred to the Progressive era, as an age of organization. "The heart of progressivism was the ambition of the new middle class to fulfill its destiny through new bureaucratic means." [39] According to Wiebe most progressives turned to organization to bring new order to American society. In diverse professional fields of law, medicine, social work and administration, a new middle class appeared which was tied together by their conviction that expertise and occupational cohesion could provide a means for ordering a fragmented society.[40]

These theoretical frameworks alone did not even begin to explain the experience of women reformers during that era. Though Wiebe's explication certainly made sense in terms of the development of professions, additional theories had to be found to explain the phenomenon of the women leaders' experience at the Jewish Home. Feminist history offers a promising alternative.

William O'Neill, in his book *Everyone was Brave*, distinguishes between those hard core feminists who were chiefly interested in women's rights and the social feminists whose primary



Undated scenes from the Jewish Home for the Aged, showing the solarium, no longer in use, and the beauty parlor. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

concerns were broad social reforms they thought more urgent.[41] During the Progressive Era, social feminism was attractive to many women because it enabled them to function on a larger stage and at the same time exhibit such womanly attributes as compassion, nurturing.[42] "The chief feature of social feminism was that it created roles for women that militated against their full emancipation." [43] Their benevolent undertakings met the women's desire for useful and satisfying work without even touching the sources of their inequality.[44] Carl Degler, in his book *At Odds*, agrees with O'Neill in his conclusion that "despite the broad range of activities open to women by the first two decades of the this century, true equality of opportunity...could not be achieved until the central problem was addressed—women's subordination in the family."[45]

The women reformers, represented by Deborah Abrams and Lena Steinberg, who established the Jewish Home clearly fit the role of the social feminists as described by both O'Neill and Degler. Their feminine attributes of compassion and nurturing and their ability to empathize with the weak stimulated their activism. Mrs. Abrams also took the path described by Wiebe. By moving into a professional position, she relinquished her voluntary leadership role, now reporting to the individuals she once led. Wiebe's trade-off was there; Mrs. Abrams in giving up her role gained a new one. She was now part of a professional organization united by their belief that their knowledge and occupational cohesiveness was essential to help solve the problems confronting society.[46]

Mrs. Steinberg continued her voluntary leadership position as President of the Jewish Home until 1936. Her relinquishing her role and power to men was a phenomenon that requires an additional theory. Mrs. Steinberg had continued to be elected President of the Board—why did she give it up? Jill Conway, in her article "Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870–1930" posits that the failure to understand the significance of the intense social activism of the women reformers during those years indicates that "New ways of behaving do not necessarily evoke any new view of the female."[47] Women and men in that era continued to be enamored by the activist who was the sage, who had access to wisdom by virtue of feminine insights and not their own knowledge. [48] This traditional view of

femininity, held by men and women, and the failure to question it meant that the women activists "could not see themselves as they really were, notably aggressive, hard-working, independent, pragmatic, and rational" in every good cause but their own equality.[49]

The relinquishing of the power from women to men on the Jewish Home Board of Directors can now be understood. The women activists did not have a conception of their own power and capabilities. The traditional view of the subordinate female was not changed by virtue of the fact that these astute women recognized the need for and established a home for the aged poor. This was seen as part of a woman's role. As the Home grew and became a complex financial and social organization, men took over.

The power of the women leaders had dissipated as did the interest in social activism. In the late twenties and early 30s after the stock market crash of '29, women saw themselves as handling only the social aspects of the Home as described in the Junior League by-laws, while the men made all the financial decisions. Traditional gender roles were reinstated and remain the same today.

The Jewish Home for the Aged was established by a group of progressive women activists as a response to the problems of the homeless, elderly immigrant Jewish poor in New Haven. Though they formed, established, built and managed the Home for 20 years, they never truly understood their power or their capabilities. The concern of these activists was for other than self. The positive though traditional womanly traits of compassion and empathy and a high moral regard for righting social injustices could not remove the stumbling block of their being in a subordinate position in their own homes and minds. Once the Home became a more complex organization, men were seen as the experts and the women took over the social aspects care and fundraising.

Note: On December 14, 1992 Deborah Shaefer–Greenbaum, CPA, was installed as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Home for the Aged. This is the first time in the history of the Jewish Home that a woman has held this office.

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Jewish Immigrant Radicalism
in Early Twentieth Century New Haven

by Paul Wessel

ALMOST TEN YEARS AGO, I stumbled across the program book for the 50th anniversary celebration of the left-wing Jewish children's camp, Camp Kinderland. I was amazed to read former campers' memories of walking past the statue of Lenin on the way to the dining hall, singing the Internationale in Yiddish all the while. We in the '60s and '70s talked as if a countercultural movement was new terrain, and here I found a vibrant example in my own culture's history!

So I began to look more into the "Jewish Left," or *Linkeh* as I discovered they were called. Soon I began to understand why there were so many Jews at the political meetings I went to, and I began to find a Jewish tradition which I could relate to.

The Jewish left, I discovered, was a pesky social movement, never quite doing what the Jewish community thought it should, nor doing what the Socialists and Communists thought either. It was a *social* movement, of people trying to find their way as cultural Jews *and* as radicals. Its story is of the interplay between an immigrant

people, their ideals, 20th-century America, and our left-wing institutions. It's a fascinating history, played out even here in New Haven.

New Haven's Jewish community blossomed from about 1,000 to 25,000 members between the 1880s and 1930, with Eastern Europeans arriving during the first two decades of the century accounting for the majority of this growth. Many of the men of this immigrant generation employed themselves as craftspeople here, and we find those active in the city's Jewish radical ranks were often carpenters, painters, paperhangers, and the like.

There was a strong spirit of the "Jewish People" in the Jewish ghetto along Oak Street—a spirit that was a driving force in Jewish radicalism. It was also a spirit which would become, ironically, a cause of estrangement of these Jewish radicals from broader radical movements.

It is common for immigrant groups to band together upon arrival in this country. In the early part of this century, mutual aid societies provided social support, community, specific sickness, insurance, and burial benefits.

The Arbeiter Ring, or Workmen's Circle (WC), a mutual aid society, was the locus for much of New Haven's Jewish radical activity in the first quarter of this century. The city's first WC chapter was established in 1903 and its membership grew to between 500 and 600 members by 1926.

The Workmen's Circle and the International Workers Order (IWO), which emerged in the late 1920s, were mutual aid societies deeply rooted in Yiddish culture *and* political culture. (The WC was affiliated with the Socialist Party, and the IWO emerged out of the Socialist Party–Communist Party split of the mid-1920s.) Activists in these groups built and ran the institutions of New Haven's Jewish Left: the Labor Lyceum (a political community center), a Yiddish chorus, and a school for their children, the WC Kindershule.

The earliest English-language description we find of New Haven's Jewish radicalism is in an autobiographical sketch recalling the 1890s by B. Kovner, a Yiddish writer and poet. His description prefigures the city's Jewish socialist and communist communities of the 1910s and 1920s.

Kovner, upon arriving in New Haven in 1892 at the age of nineteen, was offered this advice by his uncle, "Here in America a craftsman is far more esteemed than a rabbi, a cantor, or any kind of clergy, for that matter." With this in mind, Kovner set about to settle himself in New Haven:

> ...I was soon apprenticed to a tailor. During my apprenticeship I discovered that there was a union of tailors which I quickly joined. I learned, too, that New Haven had a branch of the Socialist Labor Party and that a certain Professor Daniel DeLeon was its leader. In addition, I found in New Haven an anarchist group led by Dr. Mandell and a tailor by the name of Bonoff. Both of them were fiery speakers and sharp debaters. I found a dramatic club lead by Sam Torenberg.... Within this lively cultural sphere which New Haven offered, I found myself at once involved in all four directions. Each night was another joyous celebration for me.

New Haven's Jewish radicalism was deeply based in the immigrant community. We see this well in Lou Lerman's memories of growing up in the Oak Street area in the 1920s. Lou, like many of the ghetto's former residents, fondly remembers the communality of the neighborhood: "You know, people always say a ghetto is a bad thing. I wonder about that. A ghetto is not such a bad thing sometimes, for some people. It gives them a feeling of warmth and closeness that leads them on." He continues:

> When I was a kid, every Sunday somebody came to sell a book, or a magazine, or something. There were a lot of Jewish poets around, novelists too. People who really didn't have too much of an education, but really had ability and talent. All these people would come—maybe my father was a soft touch—*every* Sunday morning. The language was alive. Things were vibrant.
>
> On Sunday mornings years back, all the small contractors—carpenters and plumbers and all that—would gather and find out who has some work, where the work is going to be, or who needs somebody. And there were the *real* political arguments, hot and furious.

For kids "on the left," an Oak Street childhood was filled with political and cultural activities:

> There was always either a concert or a play or something. Or when Foster led the miners' strike... We got a truck, went around and got all the canned goods we could. We started out with this broken down truck to go to Harlan, Kentucky. The adventures on the way, the stoning we got, the state police...

There remained a strong commitment among a small core of the immigrant generation to adamantly remain both Jewish and left-wing. Their sustained radicalism, in spite of numerous pressures to "give in," fascinated me: "What is it that keeps people's radical politics kicking," I asked, "what keeps people idealistic and inspired?" I began to focus on this Jewish left, on these people who tenaciously held on to their politics *and* their culture.

To hold onto *either* of these identities in the heat of the American melting pot is tough. Not surprisingly, the radicals in New Haven who saw themselves as both Jewish and left-wing were by and large of the immigrant generation. For the native-born children, there was an increasing tension between the two identities, with "being American" an additional pull away from either identity. Emma Davis was the exception that proved the rule.

Emma and her husband Sam are described as "the youngest people in their generation." Emma's sister, seven years her minor, "always thought they were part of my parent's generation. They were more familiar with Yiddish—speaking it, thinking it, and so."

Born in Russia in 1909, Emma has lived in New Haven since the age of four. Her father was a structural iron worker, a rare job for a Jew in New Haven, and quite active in the Workmen's Circle. In reference to him, Emma proudly describes herself as a "second-generation radical."

Emma's husband, Sam, was a relative latecomer to the New Haven scene. Born and raised in Riga in the Ukraine, as were a number of the city's Eastern European Jews, Sam arrived in New Haven in 1921 at the age of seventeen. Sam "didn't know a thing political" when he arrived here; he was introduced to the radical movement

through the Labor Lyceum, where a newcomers' immigrant group met. He points to the interest of Mr. Meisel, the *shule* teacher, and the Lyceum's large library of Yiddish books as especially influential. Sam appears to have gotten involved in radical activities quite rapidly: he learned English by the corrections Emma made following his speaking at meetings.

A strong component of American Jewish radicalism was its secular basis. Sam Davis, who was both devoutly Jewish and strongly secular, listened to my fascination with this *secular* Jewish identity and to my explanation that—for me—to be Jewish was to be *religious*. He angrily replied: "That's what *they* told you."

This secular Jewish radical movement had its own community institutions. The Labor Lyceum, the Workmen's Circle center on Howe Street, (at what is now the YWCA parking lot) housed the Kindershule. The Lyceum, with its cultural programs, library, and school strike me very much as the Jewish radical analog to the synagogue.

The community's political culture was both vibrant and widespread. Abe Abelson, a founding member of the city's Jewish Socialist Federation, penned a number of poetry books. Abe Treskunoff, a pharmacist turned photographer, was the greater New Haven Jewish Left's unofficial photographer, and was also quite active in Yiddish dramatic activities. A 1940 New Haven Register review of Michael Gold's *Money*, directed by Treskunoff at the Yale Drama School, is proudly pasted in his diary. It considered the play "the most finished production of the evening." Treskunoff also is fondly remembered for his behind-the-scenes work at the Kindershule plays.

As Lou Lerman reflects:

> The amazing thing about the people on the Left, even some of the people in the Workmen's Circle, was—and what I don't see today—a working class who didn't have an opportunity for a real education have such a hunger for culture, such a hunger for education, such a hunger for the better things... music, literature... there were so many poets around then.
>
> You'd see somebody who worked in a sweat shop come and have an evening where he reads his poetry.

> They decided that they were going to form an orchestra. And there was nobody there who knew how to play an instrument. So how do you form an orchestra? My father-in-law went ahead and he bought a clarinet. He couldn't play a clarinet!

As Lou points out here, the mainstays of the Yiddish radicals went with the Left in the big Left–Right split of the 1920s. When the split took place in New Haven in 1926, the most culturally active branch of the WC, the Y.L. Peretz Branch, "went left" and held onto the Labor Lyceum.

Let me back up and explain some of the organizational and political background leading to this split.

The Workmen's Circle was formed in 1892 in New York City. Its initial membership requirements included union membership and the promise to vote for working class parties. The organization grew to 40,000 members by 1910 and to 87,000 throughout the nation at its zenith in 1925.The popular daily Yiddish newspaper, the *Forward,* grew out of WC.

The organization's future direction was constantly debated. In 1910 there were already internal disputes about the diluting of the organization's proletarian base, and fears that the WC's secularism isolated them from the broader Jewish community.

New Haven's five WC branches totaled 500 to 600 members in five branches by the 1926 split. The Labor Lyceum was founded in 1916 by the city's WC and its Socialist Party.

New Haven's Socialist Party (SP) appears to have been very cosmopolitan and assimilationist during this time. The Jewish Historical Society archives contain some rich documents on the socialist Party's youth group, the Young Peoples Socialist League. These "Yipsels" present us with a fascinating picture of an assimilated second-generation group of New Haven high school students grappling with an Americanized socialism. The Yipsels came to life in New Haven with the enthusiasm of Jack Belford and Simon Alderman in December 1916. The mimeographed newsletter of that month—The Young Rebel—boasts of 65 members, apparently all of whom were Jewish save one. The late Abe Alderman, looking at the photo of the



Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle) Band. Undated photo. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

WC band, laughed as he explained: "He was our only non-Jew. He used to play the piano so we forgave his origins."

We find a constant interaction between the Yipsels' high school studies and their political ideals. In 1918 a debate was held between the Hartford and New Haven Y.P.S.L. chapters on the topic, "Resolved: That Socialism Offers the Right Solution for the Economic Evils of the Present Day Society." The judges were New Haven High School teacher Dr. Susan S. Sheridan, a Yale professor, and "Comrade Plunkett." New Haven won, by the way, in the negative.

Like their Yiddish compatriots, the Yipsels' cultural emphasis and Socialist politics flourished as an integrated whole. Poems and short stories fill the pages of The Young Rebel, as well as discussion of dramatic activities, debates, and public speaking.

In contrast to the Yiddish radicals, these young socialists placed themselves squarely in the context of *American* socialism; Upton Sinclair inspired their work. They celebrated Walt Whitman as "our first national poetic spokesman of our people," paid homage to baseball, and argued that Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln were similarly great men.

In further contrast to the Yiddish radicals and their heartfelt connection with the Jewish people, the Yipsels' politics were based in a romantic and abstract idealism of the "United Brotherhood of Socialism" and the "Cooperative Commonwealth." Flowery language and naturalistic allusions abound in The Young Rebel, as we see in this March 1918 editorial entitled "The Spirit of '18."

> The first days of spring 1918 will come and illuminate in colors of red, the tidal wave of Socialism. The first songs of the spring birds accompanied by the enthusiastic songs of the new freedom; the first soft breeze shall softly agitate the red flag of freedom and the first rays of the sun shall see in the wake of the great wave, truth, justice, liberty, freedom, art, and love.

The Yipsels were *empathic* towards, rather than of, the proletarian struggle. By 1919, the organization withers in New Haven, as its core members go on to college. By and large, New Haven's

Yipsels found their way into the mainstream of American Jewish society, largely setting aside their socialist politics in the process.

In 1913, while the Yipsels were still in junior high, the Jewish Socialist Federation of New York's SP emerged out of a struggle between the older cosmopolitan leadership and new younger arrivals from Russia. Many of these younger immigrants had a background in Jewish organizing, especially in the Bund (the General Jewish Workers Union) and most were critical of the complacent and timid conservatism of the old guard. (Abe Abelson was a New Havener active in the Jewish Socialist Federation.)

In the late teens and early '20s, the left wing of this group broke off from the Socialists. On the heels of the successes of the Russian Revolution and the optimism it inspired, this left wing joined the emerging Communist movement. In 1921, a huge rift in the Jewish radical movement resulted in the establishment of a left Jewish newspaper, the *Freiheit*, in opposition to the *Forward*.

The Workmen's Circle *shule* was one of the terrains where this political/cultural struggle played itself out; not incidentally, these were the institutions aimed at the American-born generation.

The WC schools were first established in the New York City area between 1905 and 1911. the original curriculum included only English-language socialist materials, because the leadership considered Yiddish to be nationalistic and thus anti-socialist. Not surprisingly,the schools gained little headway among the Jewish immigrants.

In 1918, a Bundist-inspired leadership breathed new life into the *shules*. The goals and holidays this leadership chose to emphasize are very telling:

THE GOALS OF THE ARBEITER RING
FOLKS-SHUL
(1918)

1. To teach the children to read, write, and speak Yiddish well.
2. To acquaint them with the best specimens of Yiddish literature.
3. To acquaint them with the life of the worker and of the broad Jewish masses in America and other countries.

4. To acquaint them with the history of the Jewish people, and with episodes in general history of the struggle for freedom.
5. To develop within them the feelings of justice, love for the oppressed, love of freedom, and respect for fighters for freedom.
6. To develop within them the feeling for beauty and physical and moral discipline.
7. To develop within them idealism and the striving to perform noble acts, which are necessary for every child of the oppressed class in making his way through life towards a better order.

HOLIDAYS TO BE OBSERVED
(1920)

1. *Passover* - as the Jewish holiday of freedom.
2. *Lag Ba-Omer* - in memory of the struggle of Bar Kokhba and Rabbi Akiva.
3. *The First of May* - as the holiday of Labor brotherhood and an expression of world peace.
4. *Hanukkah* - as the holiday of emancipation from the Greek yoke.
5. *March 18* - the holiday of Labor's struggle for freedom.
6. *Purim* - as a children's holiday (for costuming, exchange of gifts, and other amusements).
7. *July 4* - American freedom.
8. *February 12 (Lincoln's birthday)* - emancipation of the Negroes.
9. *Russian Revolution* - (The Conference leaves to each school the choice of the day.)

This iconoclastic program clearly shows the Left's attempts to both *build upon* and, at the same time, *steer* Jewish culture, to transform the old traditional Jewish culture into the new socialist Jewish one.

In 1919, New Haven's Kindershule was established. Its teacher, Mr. Meisel, was a poet and leftist. A 1922 school photograph shows seventy-one students, who attended twice a week after school and on Sundays. Syd Bruskin told me about the kids paying 50 cents a class. One member of the graduating class of 1923 told me with sadness that of the dozen kids, only two really got involved in the progressive movement.

As these left Jewish institutions emerged, the Workmen's Circle and the *Forward* moved rightward. This was due in part to their



New Haven Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle) Kinderschule, 1922. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

success as institutions of the broader Jewish community. The growth of the WC, especially of middle class members, diluted its politics. The *Forward*'s cosmopolitanism lead it to start easing English phrases into its pages, much to the outrage of the culturally-conservative political radicals.

The same organizations could not support both the center of the immigrant community *and* its sizable and vociferous left wing. Ferocious battles arose in the WC in 1925 and 1926 around these stresses. The Russian revolution and its treatment of socialists, the *Forward* and its "Tammany Hall" style machine, and the emphasis Yiddish cultural activities should be given, all were struggled over. Fierce battles took place in NY unions, including the ILGWU. Property, bank accounts, and summer camps were among the possessions sought by one side or the other. In the end, about 100 WC branches pulled out nationally, representing about 9,000 members, approximately 10% of the membership.

In New Haven, this was a bewildering period. Little is remembered (or admitted) of the split here, other than it being very emotional. Perhaps in retrospect it is too painful to remember. As Sam Davis explained:

> A lot of mistakes were made, no doubt about it. We should never have gone away from the Workmen's Circle because it was a large movement. But the political conditions were such that everyone who wasn't with us was against us....
>
> But people who aren't with you don't necessarily have to be against you. And you cannot influence people when you are away from them.
>
> That's what we learned in later years when our brains developed a little bit stronger.

When the dust of the split settled, the left-leaning Y.L. Peretz branch had possession of the Labor Lyceum, and the remaining "right" WC bought a new building on Legion Avenue (which now houses a black church).

The Y.L. Peretz branch numbered about 80, out of the total 500–600 Workmen's Circle membership. It is described by one of its

members as the "elite branch": they read the *New York Times*, the *Daily Worker*, and Yiddish literature. Ultimately, about a quarter of New Haven's WC members affiliated with the International Workers Order, the national *left* mutual aid group formed as an alternative to the WC. A strong working class base to this group in New Haven is remembered: a lot of its men were in the building trades and a number of its women worked in the garment industry.

The left—the *Linkeh*—was imbued with a strong self-confidence and an overwhelming optimism, bordering, some would say, on arrogance. The success of the Russian Revolution, the believed emancipation of Jews in the Soviet Union (in March 1917 all restrictions on Jews were revoked, abolishing 140 anti-Semitic statutes developed over 120 years),and the strength of an international movement all fueled this spirit. There was a sense that a great social transformation was just around the corner.

Some of the *Linkeh* formally became Communists, while many more just followed their lead. As one New Haven pocketbook maker told me: "I was never a Party member, but I believed in them. The split? Arguments, arguments. I always raised my hand on the left side."

Much of the complicated history of New Haven's Jewish left over the next 50 years would revolve around the cultural assimilation of the American Jewish community, and the *Linkeh's* involvement in a movement constantly seeking to broaden beyond its own confines, a movement constantly and often dramatically revising its strategy. It is a history of great optimism and of much building—and of disappointment and many shortcomings. But throughout it all, we find a group of people deeply inspired, and constantly active.

Lou Lerman points to the inspirational strength of this time's "feeling of belonging" in describing Sacco and Vanzetti's execution day in 1927:

> We were working on the apartment house on the corner of Edgewood and Linden Place. When the hour came, everybody on the job came down to the basement, and there was five minutes of silence and then people spoke.

> There was such a feeling of solidarity about something that wasn't here in New Haven. This was a real working class consciousness. There wasn't a person on that job, whether he was a boss or a worker, who didn't come down for that moment.
>
> I do not see that kind of solidarity or that kind of thing today.

New Haven's Freiheit Chorus is an example of one of the inspired Left cultural institutions blossoming in this period. The choruses, established in the 1920s in most cities with large Left populations, were immensely popular institutions. Mention of New Haven's chorus brought smiles to the faces of all the New Haveners I interviewed for this study; with few exceptions, everyone was involved in some way. Annual performances were major events for the entire Yiddish community. The commitment to them, and their importance to the left Yiddish community, is evident of the longevity of the institution: as late as 1952 a performance was held in New Haven.

Choruses sprang up in Hartford, Bridgeport, and Springfield as well, all under the direction of an itinerant New York conductor named Samarow. Each city's chorus would practice separately, and they would be united for the annual chorus performance. Lou Lerman remembers perhaps one hundred and fifty singers for a concert.

> And don't forget, these were workers who worked hard, like my father-in-law. He was in the soda business and he'd be out with the trucks dragging the soda all day. But he'd come running into the house and call up Treskunoff and say, "We've got to go to New Haven tonight!" Nothing held them back—they had to go!

Through the chorus, the immigrant generation kept their Yiddish alive, singing traditional as well as political songs, even though most of the members could not read music. One such political song was *Tzvei Brider,* 'Two Brothers', an adaptation of a famous Peretz story by Jacob Schaefer, a pioneer of the Choruses. It weaves a tale of two brothers, a serpent, and tears turning to diamonds, into the depiction of the origin of class society.

The chorus was a special experience for a few of the native born too. One second generation woman, a soloist who married a chorus conductor, went on to Juilliard and a career in music.

The Freiheit Chorus was but one of the activities flourishing at the Labor Lyceum in the late '20s. A newly added 120 person auditorium housed avant-garde movies and provided a forum for speakers of the left lecture circuit. (Roller skating took place on free nights to raise the mortgage money.) Piano lessons and Yiddish reading circles took place alongside the Lyceum's theater and dance activities. "It was a warm sort of communal place," remembers Lil Dimow, "They had picnics all the time."

During the '30s, many of these people on the left were active in the broader political work of building unemployment councils, and fighting for unemployment compensation and social security. The war effort became a focus for much of the *Linkeh's* later work.

Critics like Melech Epstein have argued that many left institutions, such as the choruses, were directly under the control of the Communist Party serving as "communist transmission belts." There may be a good argument here concerning the choruses' repertoire, but this "bogeyman analysis" ignores the actual experience of the people involved. It is too pat a description of the meaning of these Jews getting together after a hard day's work to sing in Yiddish about their people's experience.

No matter how much political infighting took place in the decade or so following the left–right split, no matter how many anti-religious cartoons appeared in the *Freiheit*, no matter how isolated the left pushed itself to become, a sense of the Jewish community remained here in New Haven. Lil Dimow describes the relationship over the years between her left-wing family and the orthodox Jews on the first floor:

> We lived for many years in a six family tenement on Asylum Street. It was the 1920s. We lived on the third floor, on the first floor lived a very orthodox religious family. The man was a *mohel*. At one point, his wife came running up the back steps to tell us that there were some people questioning her husband about my father. It was the FBI.
>
> He made them wait. He very slowly wound his *t'fillin*. He very slowly said his prayers—that's when she came up to tell us. When he finally finished, and asked what they wanted, they said they wanted

> to know about my father and what kind of person he was. And he said something like he's a very good husband and a fine father. He's interested in working people and he wants to see that all people have enough to eat.
>
> Now, years later, when [my husband] Joe was arrested [under the Smith Act indictments], we were still living in that building, and he was still living on the first floor. A reporter from the *New Haven Register* went up and down the street asking people about us, and he said the same thing about Joe as he said about my father.
>
> I don't think my father was anti-religious. He wouldn't walk out of the house on Saturday without a hat because he said he had too much respect for Mr. ——— the man on the first floor.
>
> I remember when my sister was singing in choir in [the reform synagogue] Mishkan Israel, my father went to one of the services. He was *appalled* because they had bare heads! He said, "What kind of religious Jews are these?"

During the depression, the Left, unable to keep up the payments, lost the Labor Lyceum building, and in 1938 purchased 37 Howe Street, now known as the People's Center. The then *Jewish* People's Center housed an IWO Jewish Sunday School, a Mandolin Orchestra, the chorus (now with an English name—The Jewish People's Chorus), and meetings of the Young Communist League and various unions.

An obviously heartfelt priority for the *Linkeh* in the '30s and '40s was the imbuing of their kids—the American born and bred generation—with their *Linkeh* spirit. It was most definitely an uphill battle. Some were sent to the *shules*, only to feel that the experience held little meaning for them.

The second generation who did become active in left-wing activities, quite clearly a minority, tended to stay away from Yiddish-oriented activity. Those who chose to be active in the Communist Party often anglicized their names and went into "mainstream,"as opposed to "Jewish," work. Many moved on into trade union work or service professions.

New Haven's second generation radicals offer some valuable reflections on their generation's disinterest in Jewish-oriented radicalism. As Lou Lerman explains:

> The Left started to crumble when the children of those people who were on the Left tried to hide what their parents were. They wanted to be like everybody else. They didn't want to be different, to stand out and say, "We think things are wrong."
>
> It started with the economic growth of Jews in business, children going to school, who didn't have any appreciation that there was a feeling of still being foreigners. They wanted to be true blue. There weren't many who stood up to that kind of thing.

A second generation union organizer contrasts the vision of his elders with his own experience in the world:

> This country is not fertile ground for what the *Linkeh* thought was necessary and possible, which was a revolution to get rid of the capitalist class. It takes an awful lot of talking to get a worker to go on strike—to join a union. You do an awful lot of educational work all through. To go beyond it is quite a step for the American working class.

Oddly enough, at the same time the second generation was moving beyond the immigrant ethnic milieux, a cultural renaissance was blossoming in Jewish Left institutions and publications. There was a flowering of ethnic-based activity during the Communist "Popular Front" period from 1935–1940. This helped sustain much of the cultural work even in the face of a rejecting second generation.

Let me quickly sum up the more recent history. From the '50s on, there emerges a crisis for the CP, and for Jews in the CP. The significant events for American Jewish Communism during this time included:

- The Smith Act Indictments of the early '50s, and the federal government's disbanding of the IWO.
- Khrushchev's 1956 revelations about Stalinism.
- In April 1956, the *Freiheit* prints that a number of prominent Jewish intellectuals and literary figures in the Soviet Union had been killed.

- The Communist Party position on 1967 Arab–Israeli war was too bitter a pill for many of its Jewish members.

- In 1968, the *Freiheit* and *Jewish Current* editors were expelled from the Party over disagreements on Israel, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the New York City teachers' strike.

Many Jews left the Communist Party in 1956, and another group in 1968. Out of this, interestingly, we find some of these second-generation "non-Jewish" Jewish leftists turned back to the Jewish fold. As Joe Dimow describes:

> For me, after I left the Communist Party, I turned to the Jewish movement as an alternative method of being active. Because I dreadfully missed the comradeship, the sense of loyalty, friendship, and so on.... I turned to the *Jewish Currents* magazine for that reason.
>
> I tried to be active in community affairs too, but I wasn't fully satisfied. I wanted a place where people would be supportive of me, not that I was constantly trying to organize somebody, but here were people who could give me encouragement. That's why I went back, in a sense, to the Jewish area where I had been as a child. But while I was in the Party, I was not involved in Jewish activities.

This is an interesting sense of returning to the fold—that your ethnic identity is always there, no matter how dormant, ready to be rekindled—and to be passed on, too.

Joe Dimow tried to send his kids—now the *third* generation—to a Workmen's Circle affiliated school in the 1960s. Someone recognized them as from a "left family" and barred them, he remembers. So he and some others formed their own Jewish school, jokingly called the Y.Y.Y., for both the Yale Yiddish Youth and their never ending questioning. The Y.Y.Y. met from about 1963 to 1966, with two or three big events each year, including secular bar mitzvahs. A dozen kids were involved, about half of whom had parents from the Jewish and/or Left movement.

By 1973, New Haven's first-generation radicals were winding down their work. The Jewish People's Center was sold, with the proceeds going towards Jewish cultural affairs: the *Freiheit*, *Jewish Currents* magazine, the Jewish Bureau of Education, the Jewish Mu-

sic Alliance, and the Holocaust Monument. Following this point, many of these first-generation radicals, ever the members of a social movement,took to defining themselves as "followers of the *Freiheit*."

In the '80s, Joe Dimow became active with the New Jewish Agenda, which he succinctly described to me as "a progressive voice in the Jewish community, and a Jewish voice in the progressive community." True to form, the Jewish radicals were still straddling—and pushing—both communities.

So, as some of us youngsters like to ask on Passover, "What's this all about?" First, I'll let Joe Dimow sum up some of the meaning of the Jewish left's history:

> They—the *Linkeh*—had a devotion to building a movement, both of socialism and of Yiddish culture, which is missing today. I think it is good for people to be as questioning as they are...as challenging of authority as they are, at the same time, the sense of loyalty to each other and comradeship I just don't see.

This sense of loyalty and commitment, which I found time and time again in these Jewish radicals, is indeed inspiring—even to a third-generation American Jew. It's worth remembering and learning from.

Politics, especially visionary politics, is not just programs and plans. It comes from the heart, it's full of hope, vitality, and creativity. This is something these elder Jewish radicals knew, and knew well.

A clear picture hangs in my mind of being in Sam Davis's basement a few years ago. In his later years, Sam turned from his trade of crafting bridgework and dentures to carving wood. His basement was filled with woodcarvings of Yiddish literary figures, and sculptures of birds, a favorite subject. A carved tribute to those killed in the Birmingham Church bombing sat on one of the tables.

Sam proudly pointed to three wooden roosters across the room: a smooth, pompous, and proud figure representing the bourgeoisie, a nondescript petit-bourgeois bird, and, the tallest of the three, a rough and crowing representation of the working class.

The figures all had a double meaning too, grinned Sam. Their wood was rejected gunstock pieces from New Haven's Olin Winchester gun plant.

Sam died in 1987, but his ideals, and his vitality, have not been forgotten.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: PAUL WESSEL is a union staffer employed by Local 531, Service Employees International Union. Born and raised in New Haven, Mr. Wessel did the initial research for this article while a History student at Wesleyan University. Mr. Wessel acknowledges the women and men of New Haven's Jewish "Left" for sharing their aspirations, triumphs, and sorrows with him, and expresses his appreciation to Professor Ron Schatz for his support of this work.





Rabbi Abraham Burstein (on left), the first English-speaking Rabbi at B'nai Jacob, hired in 1920; Rabbi Louis Greenberg (on right), hired by B'nai Jacob in 1928, from an oil painting hanging at the B'nai Jacob synagogue. See article about B'nai Jacob beginning on page 69. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

The Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, Inc.
—Summary of Meetings and Programs—
Compiled by Barry E. Herman

1988–1989

Date: October 27, 1988
Topic: "Broken Crackers and Cracked Eggs"
Growing up on Grand Avenue in New Haven, c.1914–1918
Speaker: Joseph Horowitz
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: December 1, 1988
Topic: "The Relationship Between Yiddish Culture and Jewish Radicalism in Early 20th Century New Haven"
Speaker: Paul Wessel
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: January 31, 1989
Topic: Special meeting to highlight the publishing of *Jews in New Haven, Vol. V*, edited by Werner S. Hirsch and Renée Kra
Speaker: Werner S. Hirsch
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: April 30, 1989
Topic: "52 Years of Camping—Camp Laurelwood 1937–1989"
Speaker: Robert J. Caplow and Bertha Konowitz
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: July 23, 1989
Topic: ***Annual Meeting/Brunch***
"From Pillowcase to Centennial" – The 100th anniversary of Moses and Dora Zeidenberg's arrival in America from Russia in 1884
Speaker: Alderman Nathan P. Zeidenbeg
Location: The Westville Synagogue, New Haven

1989–1990

Date: September 20, 1989
Topic: "Looking Back—13 Years" – Celebration of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven's Bar Mitzvah Year, 1976–1989
Speaker: Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: The Westville Synagogue, New Haven

Date: February 8, 1990
Topic: "Sixty Plus Years of Refugee Resettlement in New Haven"
Speaker: Panel: Sally Horwitz, Lew Lehrer, Isidore Offenbach, and William Rosenberg.
Moderator: Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: Jewish Community Center, New Haven

Date: April 1, 1990
Topic: "The Sephardic Shtetl" – Bus trip to New York to visit a Syrian-Jewish synagogue, Shaari Zion, and to meet with leaders of the Syrian Jewish community
Speaker: Arthur Spiegel (tour guide and leader)
Location: Syrian Jewish Community in Brooklyn, NY

Date: April 26, 1990
Topic: "Pins and Needles—The New Haven Jewish Needle Trades, A Story of Early Apparel Manufacturers"
Speaker: Herbert D. Setlow, et al.
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: July 8, 1990
Topic: ***Annual Meeting/Brunch***
"From German to English: Translation of Mishkan Israel's Earliest, Mid-19th Century, Minute Book." – The Pre-Civil War Days. Highlighting the 150th anniversary celebration of Congregation Mishkan Israel, the second oldest synagogue in New England.
Speaker: Werner S. Hirsch—translator of the minutes
Location: Congregation Mishkan Israel, Hamden

1990–1991

Date: October 7, 1990
Topic: The Borough Park Shtetl Experience—A Field Trip To the World of Chassidic Jewry
Speaker: Arthur Spiegel—tour guide and leader
Location: Borough Park, NY

Date: October 25, 1990
Topic: "A Disappearing Act—the Kosher Butchers of New Haven"
Speaker: Panel: Sheila Caplan, Sam Dimenstein, Aaron Kahn, Sam Teitelman, and Leon Zonder
Location: The Westville Synagogue, New Haven

Date: December 14, 1990
Topic: "Early History of Beth El-Keser Israel and the Rose Street Shul"
Speaker: Werner S. Hirsch
Location: Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, New Haven

Date: April 10, 1991
Topic: "The Sights, Sounds, and Smells of Washington Avenue"
Speaker: Panel: Lou Goodwin, Herman Levy, and Paul Goodwin.
Moderator: Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: Tower One/Tower East Community Room, New Haven

Date: May 15, 1991
Topic: "A Nation of Immigrants" – A Field Trip to Ellis Island
Speaker: Manny Strumpf and Arthur Spiegel, tour leaders
Location: Ellis Island, New York City

Date: May 31—June 3, 1991
Topic: Annual Conference of the American Jewish Historical Society
Speaker: Judith Schiff presented: "Connecticut Jewish History; Different Aspects, Different Cities (New Haven)" as part of a panel.
Location: Marriott Hotel, Hartford, CT

Date: July 14, 1991
Topic: ***Annual Meeting/Brunch***
"The American Jewish Community in the 21st Century"
Speaker: Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna
Location: The Westville Synagogue, New Haven

1991–1992

Date: October 10, 1991
Topic: "The Bakers of Oak Street, Legion, Grand, and Washington Avenues"
Speaker: Panel: Meyer Goldman, Fred Ticotsky, Lou Gitlitz, Hymen Lender, Ida Cohen Weinberger, Sylvia Cohen Tiven, Leon Weinberg, Elsie Press Hodes, Larry Sulkis, Morris Olmer, and Bernice Olmer Zolot
Moderator: Sydney Bruskin
Location: The Westville Synagogue, New Haven

Date: January 21, 1992
Topic: "Looking Back to the Future" – What was it like in New Haven and at Yale in the 1920s?
Speaker: Panel: Rose Fox and William Horowitz
Moderator: Laurel Vlock
Location: Congregation B'nai Jacob, Woodbridge

Date: March 8, 1992
Topic: Workshop—How to Organize and Manage a Historical Society Within Your Ethnic Community
Speaker: Jeanne Hickey of the Ethnic Heritage Center
Location: Southern Connecticut State University, Hamden

Date: April 9, 1992
Topic: "Know Anybody?" – Picture Viewing Fun For All
Speaker: Werner S. Hirsch and Daniel Klein
Location: Tower One/Tower East, New Haven

Date: June 11–25, 1992
Topic: 15-Day Study Tour of Eastern Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary
Speaker: Arthur Spiegel, Tour Director
Location: Eastern Europe

Date: July 12, 1992
Topic: ***Annual Meeting/Brunch***
"Bagel Beach Memoirs from the 1930s to the 1960s—Recalling the Days of Woodmont-by-the-Sound"
Speaker: Panel: Morton Adams, Richard Jacobs, Harold Kent, Milt Lebov, Dr. Elliott Perlman.
Moderators: Dr. Barry E. Herman and Judith Schiff

Also: Special words to music arranged by Ceil Small and sung by: Fran Apfel, Lorraine Estra, Ruth Frohman, and Rita Gold
Location: Young Israel Synagogue, New Haven

1992–1993

Date: October 29, 1992
Topic: "Experiences of New Haven Jews in the Military—World War II"
Speaker: Panel: Harold Alpert, Sydney Bruskin, Sam Faiman, Edward Rothchild, Arthur Slutsky, Cy Stephson, Mal Webber, and Leon Zonder
Location: Young Israel Synagogue, New Haven

Date: April 22, 1993
Topic: "Jews Who Have Made America Great"
Speaker: Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: Young Israel Synagogue, New Haven

Date: May 12, 1993
Topic: "The Sidewalks of Old New York" – A Walking Tour of the Lower East Side and a visit to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum
Speaker: Arthur Spiegel, tour leader
Location: 97 Orchard Street, Lower East Side, New York City

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BARRY EARL HERMAN, PH.D., received his MS and Ph.D degrees, both in Education, from the University of Connecticut. Currently he is a Professor of Education at Sacred Heart University and an Adjunct Professor at Southern Connecticut State University. He is also an elected member of the Hamden Board of Education. He is retired from the New Haven School System where he served as a principal; District Director, K–8; and central office administrator. Dr. Herman is a past president of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven and was the editor of Jews in New Haven, Vol. II, *and the co-editor of* Vol. III. *He is also the author of three other books and has written over 185 articles which have been published in leading national educational journals and magazines.*



New Haven Jewish Historical Society study tour of Eastern Europe, leaving for Kennedy Airport, June 1992. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

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New Haven Jewish Historical Society field trip to Ellis Island, May 1991. Arthur Spiegel, the tour leader, is shown at the far right. (NEW HAVEN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES)

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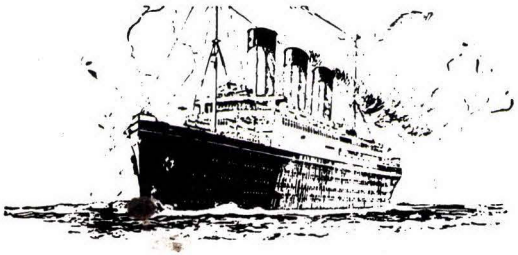
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