A GOODLY HERITAGE

THE STORY OF
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
IN NEW LONDON
1860-1955

By ESTHER SULMAN

With the Collaboration of

LEONARD J. GOLDSTEIN

New London, Connecticut

1957

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Dedicated to
The Memory Of
The Six Million Jews
Killed by the Nazis
1939—1945

For there is hope of a tree,
If it be cut down, that it will
sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof
will not cease.
Though the root thereof wax old
in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the
ground;
Yet through the scent of water it
will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.

BOOK OF JOB 14:7-9

FOREWORD

The year 1954 marked an important event in the history of American Jewry. Jewish communities the length and breadth of the land noted the three hundredth year of Jewish settlement in America, with oratory and pageantry. Now that the din of the celebration has subsided, we can look back and evaluate the celebration itself. This is important since the way a person or group celebrates is an indication of the degree of maturity that has been achieved.

Most American Jewish leaders have agreed that the Tercentenary celebration was a once in a lifetime opportunity which could have had a tremendous impact upon the Jewish community as well as the community at large. Unfortunately, those who organized the celebrations on national and local levels were unable to visualize its full potential. The energy of the celebrants was spent in proving that Jews are good Americans and thus the worth of a religious community was measured in terms of how many scientists, comedians, artists, industrialists, philanthropists, etc., we have given to America.

Though the celebration had its obvious shortcomings, we should not overlook the assets which accrued from it. Among the assets was the recognition that American Jewry has a history. This fact may seem somewhat obvious to list as an asset since any group that is three hundred years old most assuredly has a history. But actually a history that is not recorded, no matter how ancient, becomes completely irrelevant. The lack of a recorded American Jewish history became a recognized fact when the time arrived to question from whence we sprung.

The reason for this want of a comprehensive historical study of the American Jewish community stemmed, to a great extent, from the fact that anyone who attempted to record the history of the past three hundred years found a complete lack of source material on the local level. The recognition of this need stimulated many communities to begin to systematically record their histories.

We, in New London, are very fortunate that Miss Esther Sulman, the Librarian of Congregation Beth El, took upon herself

the difficult task of writing the history of New London Jewry. Although the history of this Jewish community is less than a hundred years old, it took over two years of arduous, systematic research through incomplete minutes, newspaper articles, city records, and numerous personal interviews to complete the story.

When one finishes reading the manuscript one cannot help but feel its importance is even greater than a record of events. It enables us to remember the men and women who should be remembered because it is they who are responsible for what we have today — and therefore neither they nor their deeds should be forgotten.

We should also keep in mind that the future of any living thing is as strong and secure as the roots of its past. As we chart the future of the New London Jewish community, let us utilize the accumulated wisdom of the past together with the new knowledge of the present day. Thus we can assure for ourselves a future which will be endowed with the strength of the past and the limitless promise of the future.

Leonard J. Goldstein

New London, Connecticut
June 29, 1956

PREFACE

To write a history of an American Jewish community is a challenging undertaking. However, this book could never have appeared without the interest, understanding, and help of many kind people in various parts of the country who answered my inquiries and requests promptly; and especially without the encouragement and cooperation of the Jewish community in New London.

In this work I must acknowledge, first and foremost, the devoted collaboration of Rabbi Leonard J. Goldstein who saw the manuscript through from its very beginning and shared with me all the trials of composition.

My sincere thanks to Mrs. Arthur (Martha) Ribner and Mrs. Leonard (Hana) Goldstein for their advice and suggestions and for their personal interest in the progress of the book.

I am indebted and grateful to many who gave freely and patiently of their knowledge: Dr. Jacob R. Marcus; Dr. Reuben Leon Kahn; Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz; Dr. Leon S. Lang; Dr. Benjamin Kreitman; Rabbi Morris Silverman; Rabbi Jerome Kerzner; Justice Jacob Panken; and to members of the Jewish community of New London, to name only a few of many who have been helpful; Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Greenblatt; Mrs. Frank (Mollie) Goldstein; Mrs. Joseph (Ruth) Soltz; Mrs. William (Lillian) Hendel; Mrs. Martin (Dorothy) Greenblatt; Samuel Chertoff; Morris Mallove; Isser Gruskin; Hyman Wilensky; William Perry; Harry Gordon; Abraham Gordon; Stanley A. Goldsmith and Mr. and Mrs. N. Max Solomon.

To these names I should add those of Rabbi Isidore S. Meyer, Librarian of the American Jewish Historical Society; the staff of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library; Mr. Henry L.

McGuire, and the staff of the Town Clerk's office of New London; the New London County Historical Society; Miss Cecilia Griswold, assistant Librarian and Frederick W. Edgerton, Librarian of the New London Public Library; Mrs. Margaret Stacey; the staff of the Library of The Day Publishing Company; and Miss Marjorie Case of the Connecticut State Library in Hartford.

Esther Sulman

New London, Connecticut

June 15, 1956

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CHAPTER I

PEQUOT PLANTATION

"An area of thick swamps, woods, ledges of rock and ponds of water" — this was the original site of New London as described in "History of New London" by Frances M. Caulkins. Originally called "Nameaug" (fishing place) by the Pequot and Mohegan Indian tribes that inhabited the region, New London was founded in 1646 by John Winthrop, the younger, upon receiving a grant to start a plantation "on or near Pequid" which was the name given to the vicinity by the white men when referring to the Pequot Indians. In the belief that the city would become a great commercial center, the settlement was named New London in March, 1658. Situated on the west bank of the Thames River, New London, in its early days, was the second largest whaling port in the country and was equally famous as a shipbuilding center. Its harbor, one of the finest to be found on the entire Atlantic Coast was a scene of bustling activity.

Jurisdiction of the Pequot Plantation was given to the Colony of Connecticut in July, 1647. Under the Fundamental Orders of 1639, Connecticut ruled itself as a sovereign state, electing its first governor, John Haynes, in 1639 and continued thereafter to elect its own governors and assemblies, which made the laws which the governor carried out. The Preamble to the Constitution asserted: "That the end of the Commonwealth is "to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our lord Jesus which we now profess." [1]

The Jews could count on little hospitality in a colony whose law required that all newcomers be "accepted by a major part of the town" before being permitted to take up residence. Lumped with heretics, Quakers and Adamites, to whom it was illegal to give food or lodging under the codes of Hartford and New Haven, the Jews found no enthusiastic welcome.[2] These harsh regulations were not enforced too vigorously, for the Jews who came were permitted to stay and their trading was tolerated. The first recorded reference to a Jew in the Connecticut colony was in November, 1659, when "David the Jew" was fined 20 shillings by the Hartford general court for illegal trading.[3]

Nothing definite is known of formal Jewish communities in Connecticut prior to the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. A close bond existed between the Church and State in Connecticut during the colonial period. The Church was under the patronage of the State, and the established religion, Congregationalism, was supported by taxes. No Jewish congregations were sanctioned by the State, whose statutes stated clearly: "That all such persons, being so approved according to law, as orthodox and sound in the fundamentals of the Christian Religion, may have allowance in the persuasion and Profession in Church ways or Assemblies without disturbance."[4] All that this statute required of those who dissented from the Congregational or established religion was that they should conduct themselves peaceably, and should be Christians.[5] It declared significantly that the Christian faith "Is the only and principal end of this plantation."[6] In October, 1791, an Act was passed which professedly secured "equal rights and privileges to Christians of all denominations in this State."[7]

No Jewish life was possible in this Colony, although there were scattered Jewish families in various towns and villages. Individual Jews had peddled, traded in horses, and done business in the Connecticut river towns and seaports ever since 1659, but they were not welcomed as a group in Connecticut. Most of these families stayed a short time and then returned to the neighboring Jewish communities of Newport or New York city. They knew that if they wanted to remain Jews, and continue a Jewish family life, they could not stay in the monolithic religious and social life of Congregational Connecticut. There were, perhaps, groups of Jews assembling for worship but not under the protection of the law.

New London was one of the few large towns in Connecticut in the Eighteenth Century which did not shelter even a single Jewish family.[8] Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus in his article "Light on Early Connecticut Jewry" mentions the "Carsen Case" and here we find the first reference to a Jew in New London. "In March, 1685/1686, John Carsen, who had chartered the brigantine 'Prosperous,' landed a load of goods at New London. A warrant was issued, his goods seized and impounded pending investigation and trial. The charge against Carsen was that he was a Dutch Jew and thereby an alien and accordingly not entitled to trade in the English plantations by the terms of the Navigation Acts. Although we have no record of the decision of the Admiralty Court in this case, we may assume that Carsen saved his cargo on the contention that he was a native

born Englishman — he did not deny nor affirm that he was a Jew; but rather evaded the question." [9]

Early land records of New London state that Abraham De Lucena, a Jewish merchant from New York, owed money to Edward Burling of New London and on August 23, 1723 he paid his full debt in merchandise.[10] In his ledger for 1746, Daniel Gomez, another Jewish merchant of New York, recorded a business transaction with Math. Stuart (Matthew Stewart) of New London.[11]

Many of the colonists living in New London had never seen a Jew in the flesh. Their picture of the contemporary Jew was colored by the conversionist pamphlets printed throughout the thirteen colonies. To them the Jews were Biblical patriarchs or mysterious ogres.

On December 14, 1761, Naphtali Hart Myers of New York bought land near Mill Pond in New London of the Colony of Connecticut in New England from John Hawkins of New London for three hundred and nineteen pounds.[12] This is the first recorded instance of a sale of land in New London to a Jew. Naphtali Hart Myers was a wealthy New York merchant who came to New York from England in the early 1740's. He dealt in European and East India goods and was noted for his generosity in his gifts to Jewish and Gentile institutions. On May 10, 1769, Myers sold his property in New London to Ichabod Powers of New London "for one hundred fifty five pounds lawful money" through his lawyer, Samuel Judah.[13] In 1788, newspapers were carrying the story of the trial and execution of Captain William Rogers of New London, for piracy. He was "found guilty of the murder of Mr. Abraham Nathan, of the Jewish Nation," joint owner with Rogers of the sloop 'Betsey.' Nathan had been a passenger on board.[14]

Connecticut did not disestablish the state church until 1818 when the present constitution was adopted, granting religious liberty and equality of civil rights to all Christian denominations. Nevertheless Jewish congregations had to wait until 1843 for recognition when an amendment to the Constitution allowed them the same freedom of worship as their Christian neighbors. This amendment stated: "that Jews who may desire to unite and form religious societies, shall have the same rights, powers and privileges which are given to Christians of every denomination." [15] The door was now open for Jewish settlement in the cities and towns of Connecticut.

CHAPTER II

"GO YE FORTH FROM YOUR LAND..."

Jewish migration to the United States can be divided into four major periods: 1) the period from 1654 to 1825 saw the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews coming from Holland, England and Brazil; 2) the German period, from 1825 to 1876, when there was an inpouring of Jews from the German states; 3) the period between 1881 and 1914 which witnessed a mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, principally from Russia, Poland and Roumania; 4) the period since 1933, which beheld the flight of the victims of Nazi persecution which encompassed all of European Jewry. Until 1848 the number of Jews who came from western Europe was very small. The Jews of Germany and Austria-Hungary enjoyed political freedom and did not care about leaving their native lands to flee across the sea to far off, strange lands. However, the year 1848 with its revolutions and the political reactions which followed, caused many of the German and Austrian Jews to flee their native lands; especially the students who had taken part in the German uprisings. Between 1850 and 1860 nearly 200,000 Jews entered the United States. Those who pulled up their roots and braved the hazards of a New World were, in the main, the young and the strong. By 1871 Germany had unified and the flow of immigration began to decline.

In 1860 the population of New London had increased to 10,116.[16] The historian of New London, Frances Manwaring Caulkins, makes no mention of Jews in the city in her "History of New London" which covers the Indian period through 1860 and there are no Jewish names mentioned in the New London Vital Records from 1644 to 1854. The first birth of a Jewish child was recorded in 1863 [17] and the first Jewish burial in 1878.[18]

Although there may have been other Jews who came to New London before 1860 as transients, Joseph Jacob Schwartz, a German Jew, his wife Esther and son David were the first Jews to settle permanently in New London and to take an active part in the community. Born in Germany about 1828, Joseph Jacob Schwartz came to the United States and settled in New London about 1860 where he worked as a clerk for "Strauss and Son" a novelty store located on Bradley Street. Joseph lived on Bradley Street with his wife and

son. His second son Frederick was born March 29, 1863, the first Jewish child to be born in New London according to all available records.

In 1865, Joseph Jacob opened his own "fancy goods store" at 52 State Street and in 1887, he was President of the Hebrew Society composed of the German Jews who came to New London in the 1860's and 1870's. Joseph was a reform Jew as were the majority of the German Jews of that early period of Jewish life in New London.

What was New London like in 1860? Stores and streets were lighted by oil, gas coming into use soon afterwards. Horse drawn buses carried people to the outskirts of the town, such as the Pequot section. Most of the roads were of dirt with pavement only at the crossings. The best residential districts were Bradley (now North Bank), Jay, Huntington, Golden, Tilley and Pearl Streets.

This was New London when the young German Jew, Elias Labensky, arrived here in 1867 and began peddling dry goods from house to house. Five years later, in 1872, he opened a store on State Street where Grant's is now located. Elias was born at Gnesen, Prussia, July 22, 1846. At the age of nineteen, he left Germany arriving in New York in 1865 practically penniless but fortunate in having friends who helped him get a foothold in America. For a year or so he served as an apprentice in New York; studied business methods; saved a little money and then on the advice of friends who had recommended New London as "a pretty good place to live in" set out for this city. In November, 1882, Elias married Pauline Salomon in New London. The ceremony was performed by Rabbi Brach of New York. Four children were born to the Labenskys, one of whom is now Dr. Alfred Labensky. About 1880, Elias opened a clothing store in partnership with his cousin, Jesse Labensky. It was at this time that ready made goods first began to make an impression in the clothing market. The active nature of Elias found one outlet in military service with Company D of the Third Regiment; Connecticut militia. For five years he devoted one night a week to drilling with his company and took an active part in its activities. It was during this service that he participated in the sham battle at Groton Heights in the 100th anniversary celebration of that event, September, 1881. According to his son, Alfred Labensky, German and English were spoken in the Labensky home situated on Golden Street, corner of Green Street. Elias quoted freely from Goethe and Schilling; and was an avid reader of Tolstoy.

Elias was a conservative man, caring little for the modern inventions. He ignored the automobile, preferring to ride about town in his surrey. He made one concession to the modern age by placing a telephone in his home. Elias rose from pack-peddler to become with his cousin Jesse Labensky, the owner of a dry goods and clothing store.

This store was later sold to another early settler, Joseph Michael who came to New London in 1868. At the age of 29 years, Joseph was already established in business. Born in Wreschen, Province of Posen in eastern Germany, Joseph came to New York in his fourteenth year, fresh from school. Before coming to New London Joseph lived in New York and San Francisco. Upon arriving in New London he actively engaged in business and enjoyed the esteem of his fellowmen. Joseph was treasurer of the newly formed Achim Sholom Congregation, the Society organized by the German Jews in 1878 to purchase a plot of land in Cedar Grove Cemetery for a Jewish burial ground. When the East European Jews came to New London in the 1880's, they found the kindly Joseph Michael ready to provide food and financial aid. Many of the newer arrivals established businesses with funds given them by Joseph Michael. Every Friday night Joseph would go to the rented quarters in Bradley Street (now North Bank Street) where these orthodox Jews conducted their daily and Sabbath services and distribute loaves of challah (white Sabbath bread) and bottles of wine for Sabbath Kiddush (benediction chanted over the cup of wine). Respected by both Jew and Gentile, when Joseph died at the age of fifty-five in 1894, as a tribute to him, all the clothing stores in the city remained closed during his funeral service.

Joseph Michael was followed to New London by his brother-in-law Jacob Fisher, and Hyman J. Hirsch, who was related to the Labensky and Salomon families, and by Samuel A. Goldsmith who was to become the owner of the first department store in New London.

Born at Crainfield in the Duchy of Hesse, Germany in 1845, Samuel Goldsmith emigrated to New York in 1864 staying there until 1870 when he went to Norwich, Connecticut where he opened a "fancy goods store." In 1874 he resolved to venture into a similar enterprise in New London, and leased a store at 65 State Street. It was at this address that the Bee-Hive began its existence. Samuel served as a member of the General Committee for the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the settlement of New London, May

5th and 6th, 1896. He served as a director of the New London City National Bank, the first Jew to hold such a position in New London.

This early period of Jewish life in New London (1860-1878) found the majority of them in moderate circumstances, barely eking out a living. Most of these Jews of German origin considered themselves Reform. There was no organized religious life but they observed the High Holy Days and held services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in each other's homes. One member would conduct the Service and act as the hazzan (Cantor). These families also observed the Passover Holiday with the Sedorim, ordering their matzoth from New York. Since there was no resident rabbi, weddings would be held in New York or the rabbi would come to New London to perfom the ceremony. The first Jewish wedding in New London took place March 28, 1875; uniting Morris Phillips and Anna Tiger. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. A. Aronhold.[19]

Until 1878, the little Jewish community had no special place to bury its dead; burial being held in New York or some other nearby city. The first Jewish cemetery association was organized in New London in February, 1878.[20] The Society was named Achim Sholom Congregation (Brothers of Peace). With Samuel A. Goldsmith as its president, the congregation purchased a plot of land from Cedar Grove Cemetery for which they paid $120.00.[21] The first to be laid to rest in the new cemetery was the young daughter of Morris and Anna Phillips who had died at the age of five months from a disease of the spine. The parents, not wanting to bury their child miles away from the family, were instrumental in obtaining the plot of land for a Jewish burial ground. This land is still maintained today by the children of these original owners of the cemetery plot.

The dedication of the cemetery, which took place on Sunday, February 10, 1878, was described by the Rev. J. Wechsler, the Dedication Speaker, in a letter to the editors of "The American Israelite."

New Haven, February 14, 1878

To The Editors of The American Israelite:

"There has been another link added to the Eastern Congregations to perpetuate Judaism. Our brethren at New London, Conn; have resolved to uphold in the future a Congregation, which is peculiarly gratifying under the present circumstances. It is a city of about 12,000. It is well-known as an excellent shipping point, for its harbor is not equaled at any other Eastern city.....

"Our co-religionists number here about eight or nine families and nearly as many young men.

"Having experienced for a number of years the inconvenience and trouble of not having a Jewish burial ground, and therefore being compelled to remove the remains of the departed ones to other cities for interment, they resolved to take steps to purchase suitable grounds for a cemetery of their own, and were successful in raising sufficient money for that purpose. A committee was at once appointed to select a proper place and make a bargain for the same. The committee selected at once a very beautiful spot within the limits of the general cemetery; which is magnificantly laid out, and is kept in splendid order. The proper authorities were quite reasonable in their charges, and a piece of land large enough for so small an organization was purchased, which was to be dedicated especially for a Beth Olem. I (Rev. J. Wechsler) was called upon by my brethren to perfom these religious services and Sunday last was set apart as the day for that purpose. Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, most of our co-religionists were present to witness the dedication services.

"After a solemn invocation I addressed my brethren, setting forth the importance of this occasion and explained to them the different names by which a Jewish cemetery is recognized.

"This small number have wisely resolved to unite themselves into a congregation and thirteen members have enrolled themselves for that purpose.

"This number will be increased yet by a few others.

"The young men take great interest in this new organization. Most of the officers elected are single men, as well as the president, Mr. Goldsmith.

"It is true, there are as yet as far as I could see, difficulties in the way which must be removed, if this new congregation shall be successful.

"I advised my brethren to let union and harmony prevail, that all minor differences be disregarded, and keeping in view always how beneficial it will be for them to keep up a congregation." [22]

The congregation which was called Achim Sholom was soon disbanded and all attempts for a religious community were abandoned until the arrival of the East European Jews in the late 1880's.

CHAPTER III

"WITH ALL THY HEART..."

The first Jews from Eastern Europe who found their way to America came from the cities and villages of Lithuania. Behind them were pogroms and oppression. Before them were opportunity and freedom. Vilna, Kovno, Wolozin were the centers of learning; Slonin, Utena, Svir were the little villages. In the "old country," the doors were shut. In America, the doors were open.

It was in 1885 that Samuel Cott the first of these immigrants from East Europe came to New London. Born in a small village near Kovno, Lithuania in 1867, Samuel Cott left Russia at the age of eighteen and came to America, arriving in New London in 1885. Like so many other of the East European immigrants of his day, Samuel's betrothed remained in the old country until he had become settled in the new land and could send for her. Their marriage took place in Poughkeepsie, New York where the bride's family had settled. Samuel earned his livelihood by peddling, until a few years later he was able to open a small watch repair store in Bank Street. The Cotts lived at 10 John Street. This street was soon to become the center of the East European Jewish residential section. The name of Cott later became known in many a household when a member of the family founded the Cott Beverage Company.

By 1892, immigration of the Jews from Eastern Europe to the United States was at its height. Whole villages migrated together; preceded at times by the head of the family. Relatives and neighbors (landsmen) followed one after the other, settling in the same cities or in neighboring towns in the new home.

Samuel Cott was followed to New London by Meyer Boyer who arrived in 1888. After peddling for a few years, Meyer entered the merchandising business. He gained the reputation of being a person of fine character and high ideals and commanded the respect of everyone in the community with whom he was associated. His proudest moment was the day in 1909 when his son Max was admitted to the Connecticut Bar, and became the first Jewish lawyer in New London. Meyer was active in Jewish affairs and was one of the founders of Ahavath Chesed Synagogue. He also helped or-

ganize the Ahavath Chesed Cemetery Association which resulted in the establishment of the Jewish Cemetery in Waterford.

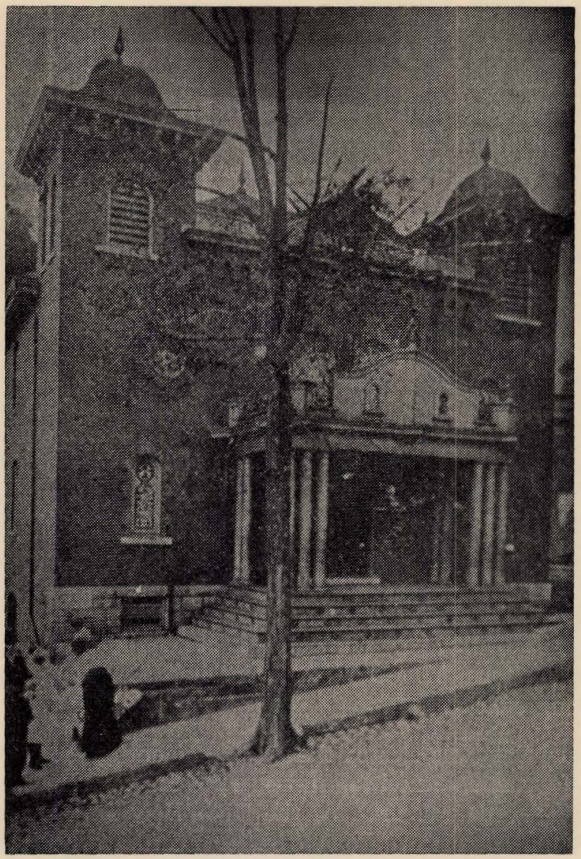
Jacob King and his family came to New London in 1889. His daughter Mary married Barnet Greenblatt in New London in 1892. Barnet is the only living charter member of the Sick Benefit Society of Ahavath Chesed, the first permanent Jewish religious organization in New London.

The majority of the East European Jews turned to peddling for their living. Some had learned trades in the old country and were able to continue them in their new home. One of the most formidable obstacles facing these new immigrants was the language barrier since they spoke only Yiddish or Russian. Before long the new language proved no obstacle since many attended the city's night schools. One of the first to teach these new Americans their new language was Dora Schaefer. For a fee of ten cents, these immigrants could attend her classes which were held in a basement room on State Street.

As a result of their industry and perseverance these young men who came to the new land poor and figures of pity, soon began their uphill struggle toward economic independence.

1. Congregation Ahavath Chesed

The East European Jews were orthodox and devoutly religious, and with their influx into New London came a new type of religious life into the city. These Jews, though they brought no worldly goods with them when they came to the new land, brought their religious articles; rich symbols of their faith. They carried their worn prayer books, tefillin (phylacteries), prayer shawls, and the silver Sabbath candlesticks. This was their baggage. With the arrival in the city of several more families from Eastern Europe, the first steps were taken in the organization of a religious community. The newcomers included Aaron Goldstein, Jacob Hollandersky, Henry Levin, Joseph Cohen, Morris Blaskin, Solomon Protas and Solomon Novok. By 1892, with the prescribed number of ten men present to constitute a "minyan" (quorum) the first regular Jewish religious services in New London were held in the second floor apartment of the building at the corner of Bradley and John Streets. Before long the Congregation had outgrown these quarters and moved to a first floor tenement at the corner of Douglass and



AHAVATH CHESED SYNAGOGUE

Destroyed by Fire - 1919

Bradley Streets. The High Holy Day services required additional space and were held in Allyn Hall on Washington Street and later at the New London Opera House on Bank Street.

Now that a place of worship had been acquired, the little group next set out to obtain a burial ground to bury their dead. They organized the Sick Benefit Society of Ahavath Chesed (officially listed on the Corporation papers as Haavas Kesed) in July, 1892 and purchased land in Waterford, Connecticut for a cemetery. The original purpose of the Sick Benefit Society as stated in its charter of July 1, 1893 was "to establish a fund received from dues, to provide for the needy, to help members when sick and to bury them when dead and to hold a plot for a burial ground or cemetery." [23] The omission of the word religion was rectified years later by the successors of the nineteen original charter members. On January 1, 1911, an amendment to the original Charter was recorded in the State Capitol in Hartford. This Amendment stated that "the amended purposes of the Society were to sell burial lots to its members; to hold religious worship in accordance with the customs and traditions and canons of the Hebrews." [24] Years later, on March 26, 1946, another amendment was added, changing the name of the Society to Congregation Ahavath Chesed, thereby giving formal recognition to an unofficial name which the Society had borne for years. This later amendment stated that the "general purpose of the Congregation was to secure the advancement of the Jewish religion by providing for religious services, religious schools . . . . . the orthodox form of Jewish worship shall always be maintained in this congregation." [25]

Samuel Cott was elected the first president of the new Congregation. He was instrumental in procuring rabbis from out of town for weddings, funerals and for the High Holy Day services. The Charter members of Sick Benefit Society of Ahavath Chesed were: Morris Blaskin, President in 1893; Samuel Cott; Henry Levin; Solomon Protas, Secretary in 1893; Meyer Boyer; J. Cohen; H. Brodsky; R. Lubchansky; Jacob King; I. Meltzer; Barnet Greenblatt; S. Glater; S. Novock; J. Fastovsky; I. Fastovsky; Georg Fastovsky; Morris Parellman; Simcha Parellman; H. Baker.

The duties of hazzan (cantor), shohet (one who slaughters animal or fowl according to Jewish ritual), mohel (one who performs the rite of circumcision) and melamed (teacher) were performed by men who resided in New London. In order to earn a

livelihood these men had to have an additional occupation such as a small grocery store, bakery, etc.

The first man who served as cantor and shohet of Ahavath Chesed was Solomon Protas who came to New London about 1890. He had a grocery store on Bradley Street. Born near Kovno, Lithuania, Solomon was noted for his fine character and humane traits. Both he and his wife Ida were loved and respected by the growing Jewish community.

1894 was an important date for New London's Jewish community. In that year, the first meat market selling kosher meat was opened by Kalef Soltz and his son, Joseph. Prior to 1894, kosher meat was brought from Norwich or New Haven and by boat from New York.

In 1899 the Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) was organized. The function of this group was to prepare the dead for burial in accordance with Jewish tradition.

Simon Silverman came to New London in 1899 to officiate as cantor and shohet. Born in Slonim, Lithuania, one of five brothers all of whom were cantors, Simon came to America at an early age. Cantor Silverman organized the first choir for Ahavath Chesed which took part in the High Holy Day services held at Allyn Hall on Washington Street. Morris Lubchansky, later to become an outstanding New London attorney, sang in the choir. In 1903 Cantor Silverman moved to Trenton, New Jersey, and later held positions in London, Ontario and Meriden, Connecticut. His last pulpit was in Columbus, Ohio where he remained for over twenty years until his death. One of the sons of Cantor Silverman was Morris, who became rabbi of Emanuel Synagogue in Hartford, Connecticut in 1923 and still occupies that pulpit.

By 1900 Ahavath Chesed had 70 members.[26] Larger quarters were needed for a place of worship. For years the congregation had dreamed, planned and talked of building their own home. The synagogue would become the social and cultural center of the Jewish Community. The members transformed their plans into reality when on December 2, 1902 land was purchased on Shapley Street for the erection of a synagogue. It was not until the younger generation undertook the task that any real effort was made to establish a permanent place of worship for the community. This generation headed by Sol Ockooneff, president of the congregation in 1904 and Jacob Goldberg (Philip Jacob Hendel) chairman of the

building committee, spearheaded the campaign to raise funds for the building of a synagogue. Others on the building committee were Louis Glater; Meyer Boyer; N. Bergman; B. L. Schaffer; Abraham Gordon; Barnet Lubow; Morris Lampert; Joseph Hoff; Abraham Bronstein and Joseph Skolowsky. The New London Day of January 22, 1904 reported that "the committee in charge of a fund-raising campaign for the erection of a synagogue on land bought by Congregation Ahavath Chesed on Shapley Street arranged for Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Masliansky of New York to come to this city to deliver a lecture at the New London Opera House on Bank Street. The committee members were Sol Ockooneff; A. Bronstein; A. Sokolosky; J. Goldberg; S. Glater; N. Berman; B. Greenblatt; A. Gordon; S. Leubo; P. Hoffs; M. Lambert; J. Soltz and J. Slavin." On July 1, 1904 ground was broken for the edifice on Shapley Street. James S. Duffy was the architect of the synagogue. At a committee meeting held in September of the same year, Sol Ockooneff reported success in the committee's efforts to secure contributions for the synagogue. The building was provided for in the most part by subscriptions which were contributed to not only by the Jewish people but also by Gentile members of the community.[27]

The Day of March 16, 1905 wrote "Pews which had stood unused in the main auditorium of the old Second Baptist Church in Union Street for many years were to be used in the new Hebrew Synagogue on Shapley Street."

The Synagogue was dedicated on Sunday, July 2, 1905 with fitting ceremonies. The following account was printed in the local Morning Telegraph, July 3, 1905:

"The local Hebrews turned out in large numbers and headed by the Niagara band, marched to the synagogue building. The line of march was from State to Huntington through Shapley to the Synagogue at 8 Shapley Street. The exterior of the building was decorated by the national colors.

"The ceremony of placing the scrolls of the Law in the Ark was observed with the usual Hebrew custom. The ceremony took place while the choir led by Cantor Jacob Mendelsohn chanted a chapter of the Numeri. It was highly impressive in character." [28]

The New London Day also wrote a descriptive account of the dedication of the Hebrew Synagogue in its edition of Monday, July 3, 1905:

"This Hebrew Synagogue, the first in the city was indeed a very special occasion for both Jew and Gentile.

"For the Jew — it marked an important milestone in his religious life. For the Gentile — it was an opportunity to witness the Jew in his religious surroundings—to see him as he really is and not as the unpleasant Shylocks of fiction and anti-Semitic literature." [29]

The American Israelite, an Anglo-Jewish weekly published the following account of this event on July 13, 1905:

"United States Senator Frank B. Brandegee of New London was the orator of the day. The other speakers were Rabbi Bernard Drachman of New York; the mayor of New London, Bryan F. Mahan; Rev. J. Romeyn Danforth, First Church of Christ; Lucius E. Whiton; Secretary of State Theodore Bodenwein and Rev. James Wilson Bixler, of the Second Congregation Church. Rabbi Drachman closed with prayer. E. Victor Goldsmith presided." [30]

The Day of August 13, 1905 reported that "the Hebrew Ladies B'nais Cheen Society presented new scrolls of the Law to Ahavath Chesed. Mrs. Meyer Boyer was chairman of the society committee in charge of the gift." The following month the New London Shoemen's Association planned to present a Hebrew Bible to Ahavath Chesed congregation.[31]

The Day of October 17, 1905 noted that "the annual meeting of Congregation Ahavath Chesed took place in the newly completed Shapley Street Synagogue. Saul Meyer was chosen president and Jacob King, vice president."

In 1906 Ahavath Chesed elected Abraham Nathan Schwartz as its first ordained rabbi. Born August 7, 1871 at Shidlova, Lithuania, Abraham was the son of Chaim and Peshe Schwartz. He was educated at the Yeshivah at Pecinis, Lithuania and studied at both the Yeshivoth of Telz and Cracow. He completed his schooling in Kovno, Lithuania and was ordained by Rabbi Issac Elchanan, Rabbi Raphael Shapiro of Bubruisk and others. After coming to the United States in 1906 he became Rabbi of Congregation Ahavath Chesed in New London where he remained until 1908 when he accepted the pulpit of Shomrei Mishmereth Hakodesh in Baltimore, Maryland.

Rabbi Schwartz's son Joseph Joshua is today National Executive Vice-Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal. Joseph's career

has included the rabbinate, a fellow at Yale, and instructor at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

The first cantor in the new synagogue on Shapley Street was Jacob Mendelsohn. From 1909 to 1920 the cantor was Lazar Kahn whose son Reuben in 1923 originated and subsequently developed the Kahn Test for the detection of syphillis. Members of Cantor Kahn's choir for the High Holy Day services at Ahavath Chesed were Joseph Schwartz; Barnet Kosakow; David Rakosky; Max Shragowitz; Henry Harris and Isadore Tarnapol.

Harry Zamkow has been secretary of Congregation Ahavath Chesed since 1917.

January 13, 1919 was a sad day for the local Jewish community. At one o'clock that morning the Ahavath Chesed synagogue on Shapley Street was completely gutted and destroyed by fire. Investigation revealed that the blaze started just inside the vestibule of the main entrance and when discovered had broken through the roof. Churches throughout the city immediately offered full use of their facilities so that devotional services might be continued by the Jews without interruption.

A short time after the synagogue had been lost the Methodist Church on Federal Street became available for purchase. A mass meeting was held by the members of Ahavath Chesed Congregation and before the close of that meeting $4,000 in cash had been raised and an additional $12,000 pledged to partially cover the purchase of the Methodist Church and the cost of it being converted to a synagogue. On August 1, 1919, eight months after the disastrous fire, the Ahavath Chesed congregation purchased the church. Mortgages which the local banks gave willingly, plus a house to house canvass of the small Jewish community, enabled the desired amount to be raised with little difficulty.

The purchase completed, the work proceded quickly; meanwhile the High Holy Days were close at hand and the synagogue was not yet near completion, nor was there any suitable space available in New London where these services could be held. An emergency meeting was hurriedly called and the proverbial ingenuity of the Jewish people was made manifest. Large canvases were secured and stretched from the roof and from one side wall of the newly acquired synagogue. Within this temporary enclosure the first High Holy Day services were held on Federal Street. As one of the unintended results of this emergency, the synagogue was

never formally dedicated. Upon its completion, the spiritual head of the congregation at that time, Rabbi Wolfe Roggin, ruled that formal dedication of the synagogue was no longer possible; that dedication to God had long since taken place by its devotion to actual religious use by the members.

Rabbi Roggin left New London in 1927 and for a year Ahavath Chesed was without a spiritual leader. Cantor Delatizky and Cantor Samuel Manchester performed the duties of cantor and shohet. In the meantime a group of members of the congregation succeeded in bringing over to this country a rabbi from Lithuania, David Traub, who in 1928 became the rabbi of Ahavath Chesed until his resignation in 1940.

Until 1945, the congregation had several rabbis but none remained for any great length of time. In 1945, the congregation obtained the services of Rabbi Moses S. Malinowitz who during his two years at Ahavath Chesed reorganized the Hebrew School. Rabbi Malinowitz left in 1947 to accept the pulpit of Congregation Ahavath Achim in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Rabbi Unger next occupied the pulpit of Ahavath Chesed and he was succeeded by Rabbi Leon M. Mozeson who came from a family of rabbis and Talmudic scholars. Rabbi Mozeson left New London in 1951 and went to Israel.

The present rabbi of Ahavath Chesed, Jerome Kerzner, was born in Vienna, Austria and came to this country in 1939 at the age of twelve years. He is a graduate of Brooklyn College and of Mesifta Talmudical Seminary. Continuing his education, he took a post graduate course in the Advanced Research Institute of Monsey, New York. Before coming to New London in 1951, he was rabbi of Beth Hamidrash Hagodol of Brooklyn, New York.

On the night of June 22, 1952, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary celebration of the founding of the Ahavath Chesed Congregation in July, 1892, a mortgage burning celebration was held. Participating in this ceremony was Barnet Greenblatt, the sole surviving charter member of the Congregation.

In May, 1930 a Ladies Auxiliary of the synagogue was formed with Ida Solomon as its first president. Since that time the Auxiliary has become a vital and active force in synagogue affairs and has been successful in raising funds for the support of the Hebrew School and other important synagogue projects.



OHAVE SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE

1919

2. Congregation Ohave Sholom

There were two distinct ethnic groups among the East European Jews. There were those who came from Lithuania and those whose origin stemmed from the Ukraine which included the Polish and Galician Jews. The main point of difference between the two groups was the liturgy. There was also a difference in their speech; each group using a different Yiddish dialect.

When the Ukrainian Jews arrived in New London they found that the Lithuanian Jews had preceded them by a few short years and had already organized an orthodox congregation according to the Ashkenazic ritual. At first the Ukrainian Jews worshipped with their Lithuanian co-religionists but finding it impossible to reconcile their many differences the Ukrainian group organized their own society in 1895 which they called "The Sick Benefit Society of Rodeph Sholom" (Pursuers of the peace). They immediately bought a plot of land for a burial ground next to the cemetery belonging to the Lithuanian Jews in Jordan, Waterford.

The charter, recorded July 22, 1895, stated the purpose as follows: "To establish a fund to help its members when sick and to bury them when dead; to hold a plot of land for a burial ground or cemetery to bury its deceased members."

Charter members of Rodeph Sholom were: Abram Bronstein, president; Mayer Mayerovitz, vice president; Solomon Protas, secretary; Max Lewyant, treasurer; Morris Blaskin; George Fastovsky; Barnet Cherkasky; Sam Cherkasky; Max Cherkasky; Morris Rapoport; Jacob Fastovsky; S. Bass; Jacob Hollandersky; Nathan Kurlandzik; Falk Hollandersky; S. Plattuss; N. Hollander; L. Altstadd; Sam Pollack; Morris Lampert; J. Jashonsky; Morris Gelasberg; Harris Becker. [32]

In 1905 when Ahavath Chesed moved into its new synagogue on Shapley Street, the Ukrainian group decided to overlook their differences and unite to form one congregation. At this time they turned over their burial ground to Ahavath Chesed. However, the differences were too great to be reconciled and since the two groups continued to have further differences, the Ukrainian group gradually withdrew from the congregation, preferring to conduct their own daily religious services in each other's homes. On July 8, 1911, this group again formed their own religious society, calling it the Ohave Sholom Sick Benefit Society. They bought land for a burial

ground in a separate section but near the cemetery of Ahavath Chesed.

Charter members of Ohave Sholom were: Samuel Cherkasky; Arran Sokol; Iman Elionsky; David Cohn; A. Wachinsky; Bene Sherb; J. Rutberg.[33]

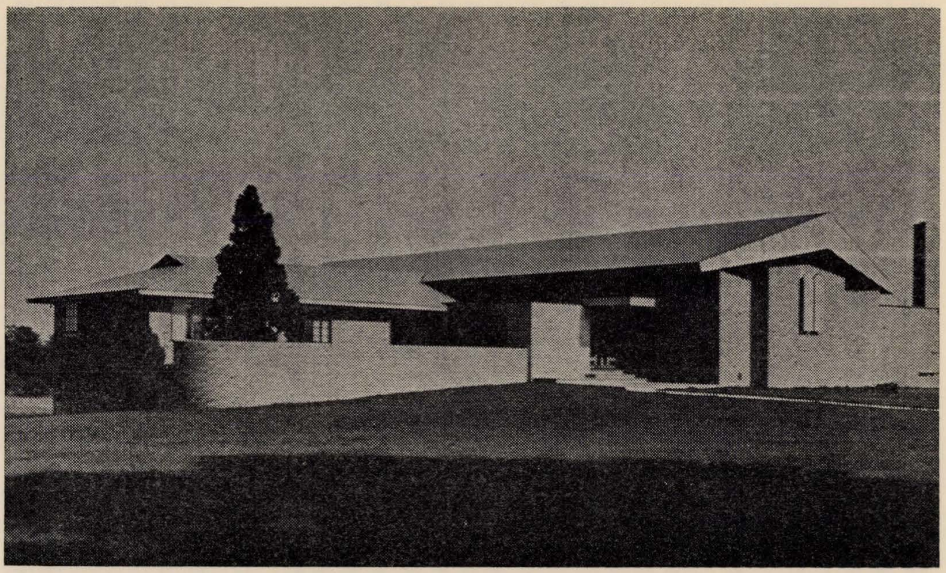
Although religious differences caused a wide breach between these two East European groups, both groups united to form Jewish cultural and social organizations; Zionism being a factor that helped to weld these two divergent ethnic groups.

A few years later, the membership of Ohave Sholom had grown to such an extent, due to the rapid increase of the Jewish population, that it was necessary to find suitable quarters. They acquired a hall in which services were conducted and finally in 1919, the congregation was able to lay the cornerstone for its own synagogue on Blinman Street.

The New London Day of November 17, 1919 wrote of the cornerstone laying ceremony:

"The cornerstone of the new Jewish synagogue Ohave Sholom on Blinman Street was laid Sunday afternoon with elaborate ceremonies. Preceding the exercises, several speakers addressed the congregation . . . At one end of the foundation floated the stars and stripes and at the other the flag of Zion . . . The first stone laid was inscribed in Hebrew and the second in English and both read 'Congregation Ohave Sholom, 1919.' Preceding the opening of the exercises a street parade, made up of the members of the congregation and the various Hebrew Societies, was held. Attorney Perry J. Hollandersky acted as chairman. He spoke on the historical aspects of the Ohave Sholom congregation, tracing its humble origin from the days when a mere handful of members met by turn in their various homes and held worship, then later the membership enlarged and through sacrifices and devotion the members raised enough funds for their own building. Other speakers included: Rabbi Wolf Roggin, spiritual leader of both congregations; Mayor E. Frank Morgan; the honorable John C. Geary; Senator Fox and Chief Rabbi Livenburg of New Haven, leading rabbi of the State."

Officers of the new synagogue were: Louis Brodsky, president; Isaac Merran, treasurer; Isaac Posner, secretary.[34]



BETH EL SYNAGOGUE

1951

A Ladies Auxiliary of Congregation Ohave Sholom was organized with Rose Sokol as its first president. This group was instrumental in raising funds for the new synagogue and lent its support to the cultural and social activities of the congregation.

3. Temple Israel

Thirty-three years after the beginnings of Jewish religious life in New London the formal opening of the third orthodox synagogue was held Sunday, July 12, 1925. Temple Israel, located at 73 Park Street, Ocean Beach was built by summer residents at Ocean Beach who came from Norwich and Hartford. This synagogue is also used by orthodox members of the New London Jewish community who live near Ocean Beach and who cannot walk the long distance from their homes to the two orthodox synagogues in the center of the city. More than five hundred people attended the dedication ceremonies. Rabbi Morris Silverman of Emanuel Synagogue, in Hartford, whose father at one time was the cantor of Ahavath Chesed Congregation, delivered an address to the gathering. He emphasized the importance of continuing the teaching of the younger generation of the Jewish faith throughout the summer. The Temple fulfilled a long felt need in that summer resort community. Temple Israel's charter, recorded September 12, 1924, stated that "its purpose was to erect and maintain a temple for the worship of God in accordance with the Jewish religion in the Orthodox fashion and to conduct services therein." [35] Daily services are still held throughout the summer months, concluding after the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Judge S. Burr Leikind of the City Court, Hartford, is now president of the congregation.

4. Congregation Beth El

It was at one of the dinners given by the B'nai B'rith Women's Auxiliary that the guest speaker Rabbi Samuel Cohen, executive secretary of the United Synagogue of America, inspired the members with the idea of sponsoring Conservative High Holiday services. This idea became a reality when the first Rosh Hashanah service was held on September 29th and September 30th, 1924 at Union Lodge Hall on Union Street under the aegis of B'nai B'rith. Leon S. Lang of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, officiated at the services assisted by Cantor William Ancis of New York.[36] Rabbi Lang recalled that "several hundred were in attendance at the High Holy Day services. It was arranged by a very fine group, sensitive to maintaining appropriate dignity

and reverence, and I was most gratified with their response and warm friendship." The sermon was delivered in English.

High Holy Day services, however, were not enough. It was generally felt that there was a need for a Conservative synagogue where people who wanted a more modern form of worship could congregate and conduct services more in keeping with the trend of the times and the changed attitudes of the young people. Finally in October, 1932, an informal meeting of ten or twelve men was held in the home of Nathan Lubow on Alger Place to discuss the formation of a Conservative synagogue. This was followed by a formal meeting which was held on October 30, 1932 in the Dutch Room of the Mohican Hotel with the intent and purpose of formulating plans for the establishment of a Conservative congregation in New London.[37] The plans reached a successful conclusion when the charter of the new congregation was adopted and recorded on November 9, 1932, stating its purpose as follows: "To conduct a house of worship for the conduct of religious services, and to do and say all things incident to the conduct of a congregation for the promotion of religious services, social and spiritual activities, to lease or own all necessary property for the carrying out of the purpose of a religious congregation." [38] Nathan Lubow was elected first president of the new synagogue which was to be known as Congregation Beth El. Other officers elected were: Louis Schwartz, vice president; Aaron E. Elfenbein, secretary; Maurice Grubner, treasurer. The new congregation used the conservative prayer-book with important parts of the service in English as well as Hebrew and appealed to many of the younger members of the community. Men and women sat together at services and the organ was used at its late Friday evening services. Many members of Congregation Ahavath Chesed joined the new congregation but retained their membership in the orthodox synagogue as well.

The next order of business was to acquire the services of a spiritual leader. Rabbi Samuel Ruderman, a recent graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, officiated at the High Holy Day services in September, 1932, which had been sponsored by B'nai B'rith. He made a fine impression upon the congregation and immediately after Yom Kippur concluded, the leaders met and decided to ask Rabbi Ruderman to remain as their rabbi. He accepted and the congregation voted unanimously to elect Rabbi Ruderman as the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth El for one year at a salary of $2,400 a year.

The first late Friday evening services were held November 4, 1932 at the Community House on Blackhall Street which the congregation rented from the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society. Congregation Ohave Sholom had offered their synagogue on Blinman Street for the late Friday evening services, but their offer was turned down on the grounds that the premises which the Beth El group now occupied were satisfactory.[39]

The first enrollment of Hebrew School students was held on Sunday morning, November 13, 1932. There was also a Sunday School which had been sponsored by B'nai B'rith but was now turned over to Beth El. The funds held by the Sunday School were incorporated into the Beth El treasury, due to the fact that the congregation was now sponsoring the Sunday School.

Rabbi Ruderman was formally installed as Rabbi of Beth El at exercises held Sunday afternoon January 8, 1933 in the Union Lodge Hall on Union Street. Dr. Louis Finkelstein of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America was the installing officer.

Rabbi Samuel S. Ruderman was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He obtained the degree of Bachelor of Science at Harvard College and ordained as Rabbi in 1932 at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. While in New London he was president of the local Zionist District, chairman of the New London Roundtable of Christians and Jews and took an active part in all community activities.

In 1941 Rabbi Ruderman accepted the pulpit of Temple Beth El in Fall River, Massachusetts where he is at the present time.

Upon the arrival of the first Rabbi, Beth El began its regular regimen of congregational activities. Plans were formulated for the congregation's first High Holy Day services in September, 1933 and a cantor was engaged for $250.00. The Services were held at the Union Lodge Hall for the High Holy Days due to the limited space available at the Community House on Blackhall Street. Guest cantors for the High Holy Day services from 1933 to 1948 have include the Rev. Schub; Abraham Bleiwas; Nathan Grossman and Harry Ornstein. Beth El's first full time cantor was Jacob (Jack) Copeland who served the congregation from 1933 to 1948. Since that time, Eleazar Bernstein has officiated as cantor of the congregation.

In March, 1933, members of Beth El organized a cemetery association for the purpose of obtaining land for a burial ground in Groton, Connecticut. Louis Elfenbein was appointed chairman and Benjamin Kaplan was treasurer of the cemetery association. Maurice Grubner has been chairman of the cemetery association since November, 1933.

By 1935, under the leadership of Rabbi Ruderman, there had been organized a Junior Congregation; the Sisterhood of Beth El; the Hebrew and Sunday School; a literary circle; a Boy Scout Troop; weekly news letters; and the Men's Club of the Congregation. The latter was formed January 25, 1934 to sponsor cultural and social activities and elected Morris Lubchansky as their first president. A choir was organized in October, 1935 and an organ was installed. Ever since its founding, the congregation had been building up its library which today (1955) has over one thousand volumes. In 1947, the Sisterhood took over the maintenance of the Library which was dedicated as a memorial to the late Lena C. Kaplan. Perhaps the finest tribute paid to Beth El during its early years was made by Professor Franklin Morris of Connecticut College for Women who said that Beth El is ". . . one of the organizations that is doing the most for the intellectual and cultural advancement of this city." [40]

In September, 1941 Rabbi Myer S. Kripke came to New London to occupy the pulpit vacated by Rabbi Ruderman. Born in Toledo, Ohio, Rabbi Kripke was graduated from New York University and received his M.A. degree from Columbia University. He was ordained as Rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. In 1946 he left New London to accept the pulpit of Beth El Synagogue in Omaha, Nebraska.

Rabbi Irving Pearlman succeeded Rabbi Kripke as spiritual leader of Beth El. Born and educated in Chicago, Illinois, he was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Rabbi Pearlman left New London in 1947, accepting a pulpit in New Jersey.

From 1947 to 1952, the spiritual leader of Beth El was Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman, who received his B.A. degree from Yeshiva College in New York and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where he received the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters in 1952. Rabbi Kreitman left Beth El in 1952 to become the Associate Rabbi of the Brooklyn Jewish Center in Brooklyn, New York, the largest synagogue center in the United States.

Not many years after the founding of Congregation Beth El in 1932, it became apparent with the rapid growth of the new Conservative synagogue that its quarters in the Community House were inadequate. Facilities were woefully lacking for fulfilling the threefold function of a synagogue — as a house of worship, a house of learning and a center of social and organizational activities. With regard to the religious functions, the congregation had to resort to the use of outside facilities for High Holy Day services; weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. Basically, the congregation lacked an adequate home. The first step taken was the organization of a Building Fund Committee in July, 1943 with Maurice Grubner, chairman. Other members of this original Building Committee were: Aron Agrin; Eli Dane; Oscar Dane; George Elion; Harry R. Elion; Aaron Elfenbein; Mrs. Victoria Glassenberg; Mrs. Bernard Glassman; E. Victor Goldsmith; Henry Harris; Benjamin Kaplan; Lena C. Kaplan; Louis Kaplan; Morris Lubchansky; Mrs. Morris Lubchansky; Nathan Lubow; William Polinsky; Mrs. Arthur Ribner; Moses Savin; Mrs. Joseph Schwartz; Joseph Shepatin; Samuel Zabarsky. During the war years, all thoughts of a Building Fund campaign were abandoned. After the war, a new Building Committee was formed with Aron Agrin, chairman and with the following members: Eli Aronson; Eli Dane; Oscar Dane; George Elion; Harry R. Elion; Melvin Freedman; Mrs. Victoria Glassenberg; Willian Gottlieb; Mrs. Morris Horowitz; Benjamin Kaplan; Louis Kaplan; Abraham Kirschenbaum; Charles Krinsky; Morris Mallove; William Polinsky; Mrs. Arthur Ribner; Mrs. Jacob Rosen; Moses Savin; Mrs. Alex Shapiro; Joseph Shepatin; Charles Suisman; Morris Sulman; Mrs. Morris Sulman; Louis Wool; Samuel Zabarsky.

It was Aron Agrin and the members of the two Building Committees who brought the dream of a new home for Beth El to reality through their devoted and untiring efforts in behalf of the Building Fund Campaign. Under the spiritual guidance of Rabbi Kreitman the last steps of the congregation's long effort toward building its own home were completed. On March 30, 1948, the property on Ocean Avenue was purchased for the construction of the new synagogue. Percival Goodman of New York was the architect, with Sol Bernstein of New London, the associate architect.

A Dedication weekend for the new synagogue began Friday evening, May 4, 1951 with a capacity congregation of more than 600 persons in attendance. Presentation of gifts to the Synagogue

included the Menorah (seven branched candelabra) given by the First Congregational Church and two pulpit chairs presented by the Methodist Church.

The present spiritual leader of Beth El is Rabbi Leonard J. Goldstein who came to New London in 1952 from Green Bay, Wisconsin where he had occupied the pulpit of Cnesses Israel for four years. Born in Trenton, New Jersey, Rabbi Goldstein received his college education at Yeshiva College in New York city where he was graduated with a B. A. degree. In 1948 he was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

One of the most active groups at Beth El has been its Sisterhood which was organized in November, 1932 to "promote the welfare of Congregation Beth El and to assist it in every way possible." The first president was Lena Copeland Kaplan. Since 1932 the Sisterhood has played an important role in the life of the community as well as the congregation.

New London Jewry's greatest contribution to community life is the continuance of the ancient faith. Through the constant practice of their living religion they have enriched the content of Jewish life, thereby enriching the life of the community. These spiritual possessions are the most valuable elements of the rich heritage the Jews of New London carry on into the future.

CHAPTER IV

JEWISH FARMERS IN CHESTERFIELD

An important builder of Jewish life in America, though never a resident of this country, was Baron Maurice de Hirsch, born in Munich, Germany in 1831. One of the great philanthropists of modern times, this great Continental railroad builder, saddened by the economically rootless life of the ghetto Jews, spent his entire fortune helping Jews to emigrate and in establishing colonies in various parts of North and South America. One of the agricultural colonies founded with the assistance of Baron de Hirsch was located in Chesterfield, Connecticut, ten miles from New London.

Many of New London's present Jewish residents are descendants of the early colonists who settled in Chesterfield in 1890 after fleeing from oppression in Russia. These farmers engaged mainly in dairy-farming since the soil was not rich enough to make market-gardening profitable. Each farmer raised his own fodder as well as the potatoes and other vegetables required for his own family. These farmers, however, were not successful. They knew little about farming and had bad fortune with their crops.

Some of the first Jews to arrive sold their farms to later arrivals and went away discouraged. Most of those who remained turned to some trade, either hiring Poles to work their farms or selling out directly to them. Many also went into the business of putting up summer boarders and at one time Chesterfield was well known as a summer vacation spot.

As early as 1891 some Jews had branched off into business and were devoting their entire time to the manufacture of wearing apparel and other articles. They did piece work for New York concerns, shipping their goods by horse and wagon to New London whence they traveled to New York by train.

The first Jewish farmer to settle in Chesterfield was Hayyim Panken. It was in 1890 when he had only been in the United States about three months that he bought a farm of some several hundred acres in Chesterfield. Before the year drew to its close, twenty Jewish families had followed Hayyim Panken to Chesterfield, inc-

luding Harris Kaplan; Pesach Ribner; Max and Ida Polsky; Moses Yadowsky and Herman Nissenson.

Hayyim Panken was an unusual man in many respects. He was an idealist and a truly religious person. Since the rights he enjoyed were made possible by others, he always recognized the rights of others. He had a rather interesting life before emigrating to America. He had been a farmer in Russia employing a large number of people on the land which he farmed. He was regarded as a very wealthy man by the standards of that time. The regime of Alexander III instituted laws which denied Jews the right to own land or even cultivate land on a large scale. This together with other reverses depleted whatever wealth Hayyim had and left only enough to emigrate and to settle in the United States. He remained in Chesterfield about five years and then went to New York City because there were five boys in the family whose education could not be financed through farming.

Like their fellow Jews in New London, these orthodox Jews wasted no time in organizing a religious society. In 1892, with money provided by the trustees of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, a beautiful spot on a hillside overlooking the Chesterfield valley was chosen and became the site of their modest Synagogue. The members of the congregation conducted their own daily services. A rabbi came every autumn from New York to officiate at the High Holy Day services.

This congregation called itself "The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society." The charter, which was framed and placed permanently in the Synagogue stated the purpose of the Society as follows: "We the subscribers for the purpose of perpetuating the cause of Judaism in all its essential purity and cherishing and promoting its great and fundamental principle — the rock upon which our undying faith is founded — the belief in, and the worship of one God, hereby unite to form a religious society for public religious worship according to the principles and practices of our faith under and by the name of "The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society."

The Charter members were Bair Kasan; N. Polski; N. Kirsch; A. Kirsch; B. Kirsch; Harris Kaplan; H. Tannen; T. Weizburd; Peretz Schwartz; Jacob Hollandersky; Moses Schaenen; D. Cohon; B. Cohen; and Jacob Freiman. [41]

On October 6, 1894, at a regular meeting, the Society decided to acquire a cemetery and the members were to be taxed according to their means.[42] The committee appointed to acquire the cemetery and set it up were: Zvi Nissenson; Peretz Schwartz; Harris Kaplan; Mordecai Polsky. A few months later, February 16, 1895, Harris Kaplan, one of the original settlers, contributed a piece of land for the cemetery.[43]

By January of 1892, the Jewish population of Chesterfield was approximately five hundred. Today the Jewish population is but a handful. Some of the children of the early settlers stayed in Chesterfield but many of them set out for the city to seek their fortune. A number of them came to New London where they have taken an active part in Jewish community life and in civic affairs.

Many of their children attained some degree of fame, such as Jacob Panken, Judge of the Domestic Relations Court in New York, son of Hayyim Panken; Judge Charles Hoffman also of New York, son of Louis Hoffman; and Moses Savin of New London, formerly a State Senator and mayor and now a councilman.

CHAPTER V

"THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY..."

1. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The religious upbringing of the young was of primary importance to the orthodox Jews. At first, some families had hired private tutors to instruct their children in the elements of Hebrew and in the basic religious precepts. Most families however, welcomed the melamed (teacher) who came knocking on the doors of the various homes after his day's peddling was done.

In 1898 some of the more enterprising instructors assembled enough students to conduct religious classes which met after public school hours and which they called a cheder, after the manner of the old country. These classes met in the same rooms used by Ahavath Chesed for its daily religious services, in the building on the corner of Douglass and Bradley Streets.

Some of the tutors of this early period were Hyman Shragowitz, Solomon Protas, Moses Feder and Reuben Eisenberg who later became one of the founders of the New London Zionist District. Prior to 1910, a Hebrew education was obtained only by hiring these private tutors. Girls as well as boys were taught Hebrew in this manner. It was in 1899 that the first of these boys became Bar Mitzvah in New London. He was Louis Cott, the son of Samuel Cott, the first East European immigrant to settle here.

An attempt to organize a Hebrew School was made about 1910. Classes were held in the building at the corner of Douglass and Bradley Streets. Shortly after its opening, this school was disbanded when its instructor left to accept a teaching position in Norwich, Connecticut.

Among the pioneers of the second Hebrew School were Abraham and Rebecca Gordon; Jacob and Ida Solomon; Hattie Harris; Rose Shafner and Dora Snitkin. This school was opened about 1912 at the corner of Bank and Pearl Streets, over what is now Devlin's Restaurant. The instructors were Leon Kopelovitz, David Wool and Meyer Peskoff. Later this school was moved to a building at 454 Bank Street.

In October of 1914, Herman Beck, former principal of the Hebrew School in New Haven, Connecticut came to New London to

succeed Leon Kopelovitz as principal of the Hebrew School. During this period, there were two hundred children enrolled in the school whose officers were Louis Kosakow; Joseph Shalowsky; Louis Wolf; Jacob Goldberg and Meyer Boyer. The children were taught the Hebrew alphabet and the Hebrew Bible while the advanced students began the study of the Talmud. Classes were held daily after public school and also throughout the summer months.

Meanwhile, in 1914 Fraternity Lodge B'nai B'rith organized the first Jewish Sunday School in the old Coit Street School Building. A group of women volunteered to teach the children in the Jewish community between the ages of four and thirteen, from kindergarten through the sixth grade. About one hundred children enrolled in this school which charged no tuition. These early teachers were Sophie Baratz (Mrs. John Baratz); Madeline Hess; Sadie Mann; Lena Kaplan; Jennie Baratz (Mrs. Maxwell Silver); and Bessie Shafner (Mrs. N. Max Solomon). In addition to serving as superintendent, Ezekiel Spitz was chairman of the school committee consisting of Emanuel Henkle, Benjamin Kaplan, Morris Lubchansky and Ludwing Mann. The Sunday School was publicly described by the superintendent of Public Schools, Charles B. Jennings, as the best conducted Sunday School in the entire community. In 1917, a fire destroyed the building housing the Sunday School and classes were suspended. One of the earliest accomplishments of the New London Chapter of the Women's Auxiliary of B'nai B'rith was the reorganization of the Sunday School. Classes were held in rooms in the Lena Building on State Street and later in the Union Lodge Hall on Union Street. In 1925 the New London Hebrew Ladies Aid and Educational Society purchased the building at 60 Blackhall Street which became the Hebrew Institute and both the Hebrew School and Sunday School moved in, to remain there until 1932 when Congregation Beth El took over the direction of both the Hebrew School and Sunday School. From 1925 to 1932, the Hebrew School was sponsored by the entire Jewish community with classes held at the Hebrew Institute which had been outfitted as a school with funds raised by the Jewish community. Nathan Lubow was Chairman of the Board of Education formed to direct the activities of the school. A Parent-Teachers Organization was instituted in 1929 and held monthly meetings in the upstairs assembly room of the Hebrew Institute. The Hebrew Institute later became known as the Community House.

The New London Day of December 27, 1929 wrote that: "Rabbi Louis Greenberg of New Haven was to be the speaker at the Chanu-

kah Exercises of the New London Hebrew School which were to take place in Bulkeley Auditorium. Pupils of the Hebrew School were to present a comedy as part of the program with a cast including: Milton Sheriff; Beatrice Sharaf; Esther Katz; Ida Meyer; Mary Meyer; Sylvia Harshowitz; Theodore Sharaf and Alfred Agrin. Teachers of the Hebrew School were: Bernard Levine, Miss B. Terman and C. Zinn." In March, 1930 an entertainment in celebration of Purim was scheduled by the children of the New London Hebrew School at the Hebrew Institute on Blackhall Street. Among those slated to take part were Adeline Kaplan; Sally Horowitz; Jacob Meyer; Louis Lazerow; Ruth Plotkin; Beatrice Sharaf and Sylvia Harshowitz. The Day of October 12, 1930 reported that "Rabbi Jacob Richman, scholar and educator, was named principal of the New London Hebrew School. Rabbi Richman was the author of 'Laughs from Jewish Lore,' currently in its fifth printing."

The first graduation exercises of the Hebrew School was held Wednesday evening, September 30, 1931 in the Ahavath Chesed Synagogue on Federal Street. The program opened with songs in Hebrew led by Miss Miriam Frieden, a teacher at the school. The guest speaker was Rabbi Morris Silverman of Emanuel Synagogue in Hartford. The five graduates were: Leon Blumenthal; William Feldman; Lillian Ribchinsky; Theodore Sharaf and Anna Snitkin."

In 1932, when Congregation Beth El was founded, the new congregation also moved into the Hebrew Institute which served as its house of worship and school. The first Confirmation at Beth El was held in May, 1934. The Confirmands were: Morris Rakosky; David Ginsberg; Morris Wessel; Howard Hauss; Richard Horowitz; Rosanna Kaplan; Evelyn Solomon; Geraldine Schwartz; Ruth Plotkin and Pearl Mallove. Rabbi Ruderman also introduced the ceremony of Bas Mitzvah at Beth El. The first Bas Mitzvah in 1935 was Rosanna Kaplan, daughter of Benjamin and Lena Kaplan. She lead portions of the service and delivered the sermonette. The Religious School at Beth El grew rapidly and by 1938 it had 118 pupils which included children from Mystic, Chesterfield and Montville. The first graduating class of the Hebrew School held its commencement exercises May 22, 1936. By the end of 1937, the Junior Congregation could expect as many as one hundred children to attend services conducted entirely by its members. The first Parent-Teacher's Association of the Beth El Hebrew School was organized March 1, 1938, with Mrs. Max (Tia) Laurie, president. Under the combined efforts of the Sisterhood and of the congrega-

tion's educational committee, the "Institute of Jewish Studies" prepared a schedule of courses for the adults.

In 1945, Rabbi Myer Kripke, the spiritual leader of Beth El, instituted the "unified school" plan as designated by the United Synagogue of America. This eliminated the "Sunday School" as a separate institution. The new plan also required an equal education for boys and girls. According to the rules of the newly organized school every child was required to attend Hebrew School three times a week beginning at the age of eight. This eliminated the unsatisfactory type of education which consisted only of preparation for Bar Mitzvah. Following Bar Mitzvah the students were offered the incentive of Confirmation which required two more years of study.

Beth El takes great pride in its well organized Hebrew School which in 1955 reported a registration of over two hundred boys and girls. This achievement in developing a fine Hebrew School was possible only through the untiring efforts of all those connected with the School. In November, 1933, the Board of Directors of Beth El organized a Hebrew School Committee and appointed as chairman, Morris Hauss who officiated in that capacity for seven years. Others who have served as chairmen were Benjamin Kaplan (five years), Morris Horowitz and Julius Sheriff. Mr. Sheriff has served on the committee since its inception in 1933 and has acted as its chairman since 1947.

Henry Bernstein, the Educational Director and his brother, Cantor Eleazar Bernstein, have been associated with the Hebrew School since the early 1940's. They have been instrumental in formulating a curriculum of studies which has resulted in a high standard of religious education for the children of the community.

In 1953, Ahavath Chesed and Ohave Sholom united to sponsor an orthodox Hebrew School.

At present (1955) the New London Jewish Community can boast of two Religious Schools which afford a well integrated Jewish education to 276 children. According to estimated figures over 90 per cent of the Jewish children of school age in New London are receiving a Jewish education.

An important step forward in education was made when the newly formed Hebrew Day School (Yeshivah) of Eastern Connecticut opened its doors in September, 1955. Representing the Jewish communities of Norwich, New London, Colchester and Willimantic,

the school will serve the educational needs of the Jewish children in these communities. Rabbi Michell Geller of Norwich and Rabbi Jerome Kerzner of New London are co-principals of the school which combines secular and Hebrew education in an integrated program. Located at 21 Fairmount Street in Norwich, the school is the first of its kind in this area with others in the state at Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury.

2. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

On December 19, 1903, a group of young Jewish men organized the New London Literary and Beneficial Society with offices at 465 Bank Street, for the purpose of sponsoring social, literary and civic programs. Samuel Richmond of 21 Franklin Street was the president of this group which was the first organization to foster cultural activities amongst the Jewish community.

In 1914, a group of young men organized the local branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association which existed until the late 1920's. Although the prime purpose of the YMHA was social, it also fostered religious and educational activities. The newly organized Zionist District also brought well-known Zionist personalities to the lecture platform. In the early 1920's, concerts and lectures were sponsored by Hadassah, bringing to New London such well-known personalities as Henrietta Szold; Alice Seligsberg; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver; Maurice Samuel and other Jewish luminaries.

In the late 1920's, a group of men in the Jewish community felt the need of a cultural program that would be stimulating to the mind as well as the soul; civic as well as religious and educational. With this purpose in view, and with Morris Lubchansky as chairman, this group provided New London with prominent speakers such as John Haynes Holmes; Arthur Garfield Hayes; Ludwig Lewisohn and many others.

In January, 1934, the Men's Club of Congregation Beth El was organized and this group sponsored Forum series and debates. These Forum series continued for a number of years, bringing to New London such luminaries as; Pierre Van Paassen; Robert Gordis; Milton Steinberg; Sidney Goldstein; Willian Lyon Phelps; Horace Kallen; Ira Eisenstein; James G. McDonald; Edward L. Israel; Louis Finkelstein; Maurice Samuel; Stephen S. Wise.

Since 1951, the newly organized New London Jewish Community Council, composed of the various local Jewish organizations has been the sponsor of the Forum Series.

CHAPTER VI

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM..."

1. NEW LONDON ZIONIST DISTRICT

Zionism in New London had its beginnings with the coming of the young Jewish men from Poland and Russia, many of whom were members of Chovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion). The new arrivals transplanted the Chovevei Zion movement to the soil of their adopted country. The Chovevei Zion collected funds for the purchase and colonization of land in Palestine.

The American Jewish Year Book for 1899-1900 (Vol. I, -39) mentions a Chovevei Zion in New London with Moses Feder of 49 Bradley Street, secretary of the Society which was listed as a member of the newly organized Federation of American Zionists.

Shortly after the first Zionist Congress convened in 1897 in Basle, Switzerland, the Zionists in America came in direct touch with Theodor Herzl and organized the Federation of American Zionists with Richard Gottheil as its first president and Stephen S. Wise, the first secretary. The separate Zionist groups which had come into existence in the various cities, including Chovevei Zion in New London, immediately became a part of the Federation of American Zionists. An effort was made to organize Zionist societies throughout the United States.

In New London, Chovevei Zion existed for about two years and though there were Zionists in the city, there was little Zionist activity until several years later when in 1906 Isaac Resnikoff settled in New London, bringing to his new home his ardent support of Zionism. Isaac renewed Zionist activities in the city with the sale of Shekolim. Collections were made from house to house and in the Ahavath Chesed Synagogue on Shapley Street after daily worship. These monies were sent to the central office in New York city of the Federation of American Zionists.

As more of the younger groups of East European immigrants settled in New London, a second Zionist society was formed and known as the Order Sons of Zion or B'nai Zion. Organized in 1913 at a supper meeting in Rappaport's Kosher restaurant on State

Street, the founders were Mrs. Joseph Soltz; Isaac Resnikoff; David Alter; Reuben Eisenberg; Leon Kopelovitz and Morris Mallove, the latter bringing his leadership and organizational skill to the Zionist group. The Order Sons of Zion was divided into Camps; the New London group taking the name of the Samuel Mohilever Camp in memory of the leader of the Russian Jewish Zionists before the appearance of Theodor Herzl. The Order Sons of Zion was always an integral part of the Federation of American Zionists, paying its shekolim and a modified per capita tax direct to the Federation of American Zionists.

Until World War I, Zionism was not strong among New London's Jewish community. Many of the older people opposed political Zionism. They still clung to the ultra orthodox idea of the Messiah who would lead the Children of Israel back to the Promised Land. As the years went by bringing with them stories of the continued persecution of their fellow Jews in the old country, many of these older immigrants began to join the Zionist organization.

Among the early Zionist workers in New London in addition to those already mentioned were: Louis Brodsky; Julius Lynn; Marcus Falk; Simon Shifreen; Samuel Chertoff; Meyer Peskoff; Charles Schuman and Ezekiel Spitz.

The Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, calling for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine reawakened the dormant desire for the return to Zion. Many new members were brought into the fold, including many of the pious Jews who formerly frowned upon political Zionism. A month after the Balfour Declaration, the members of the Young Men's Hebrew Association at their regular meeting with William Polinsky presiding, presented a resolution to support the Zionist movement and formed a Maccabean Circle under the auspices of the Young Men's Hebrew Association for the purpose of studying the problems of Zionism.

The Jewish Legion in Palestine formed in England during World War I by Vladimir Jabotinsky was enlarged by recruits from the United States. The American contingent was composed of only such Jewish volunteers in America who were excluded from the draft law. In order to join the Jewish Legion they had to enlist in the British Army. A fiery orator, imbued with an ardent love of Zion, Vladimir Jabotinsky came to New London and spoke to the Jewish Community gathered at the New London Opera House on Bank Street. Jabotinsky recruited four young men from

New London into the Jewish Legion. They were: Charles Bronstein, "Chick" Ginsberg, Morris Gordon and Abraham Schuman. These Jewish troops marched under the Zionist flag, wore the Mogen Dovid as their insignia, received all their orders in Hebrew and had many Jewish officers.

In July of 1918, the Federation of American Zionists held their annual convention in Pittsburgh. An immediate change effected by the convention was the reorganization of American Zionist bodies into a united Zionist Organization of America. The entire country was divided into Zionist Districts. The Organization became responsible for all American Zionist activity. The Samuel Mohilever Camp of the Order Sons of Zion immediately became a part of the New London Zionist District which officially came into existence in 1918.

The sentiment amongst the older orthodox Jews in New London who opposed political Zionism began to change with the arrival of Chaim Weizmann in New York in April, 1921 to establish the Keren Hayesod as one of the two main instruments of the rebuilding of the Homeland. The other, the Jewish National Fund, had been established in 1889. The Jewish National Fund became a revered tradition amongst the Jewish people. The little blue box was as familiar in the home as the daily bread and potatoes. No matter how poor he was, the Jew always gave to the Jewish National Fund Flag and Flower Day Collection.

Keren Hayesod also became the "Peoples' Fund." It was the means whereby the entire Jewish people, rich and poor, could take an active part in the upbuilding of their ancient homeland in Palestine. In later years the Keren Hayesod was embraced in the combined United Palestine Appeal. When Chaim Weizmann came to Hartford on a Sunday in May, 1921 to speak on behalf of Keren Hayesod, the whole contingent of New London Zionists drove proudly in their shining new Ford automobiles to see and hear this renowned Jewish leader.

The sale of shekolim to buy land in Palestine was now superseded by the Keren Hayesod (Palestine Foundation Fund) and Keren Kayemeth (Jewish National Fund). When these two funds were combined in 1925 in the United Palestine Appeal, the Jewish Community of New London wholeheartedly supported its annual campaign.

One of the early combined drives opened with enthusiasm at a banquet in the Union Lodge Hall on Union Street, Sunday evening, January 27, 1929. Louis Cohen was in charge of the affair with 150 persons present. Samuel Chertoff, chairman of the local United Palestine Appeal Drive, announced that $3,100 of a $5,100 quota had been raised at the banquet.

The Arab riots in Palestine from 1920 on, with their numerous incidents of violence, snipings and bombings reached their peak in August, 1929 when colonies were pillaged, homes, hospitals and orphan asylums destroyed. In the United States, the Palestine Emergency Fund was created and New London's Jewish Community with Ezekiel Spitz as chairman set about to raise its quota of $2,000. A special service was held in Temple Israel at Ocean Beach, devoted to the sufferings of the Jewish people in Palestine. Rabbi Freedman of Springfield, Massachusetts, spoke eloquently on the need for relief and described the terrible conditions that prevailed in that land. Visitors from many cities were present and though most of them had already given donations in their own home towns, these summer visitors contributed the sum of $230.00 to the Palestine Emergency Fund.

Until 1936, the annual United Palestine Appeal Campaign was sponsored by the various Zionist groups in New London with workers from the Zionist District, Hadassah, Junior Hadassah and Masada. In 1936, the scope of activities of the United Palestine Appeal widened as it launched its campaign for the relief of the Jews in Germany and other lands as well as continued reclamation and reconstruction of the Holy Land. As the problem of the rescue of the German Jew became more acute, more intense campaigns were launched, culminating in 1938 with the establishment of the United Jewish Appeal, embracing the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal and the National Refugee Service which joined the following year.

The rise to power of Hitler and the threat of war increased the money-raising activities of the local Zionist District. The British White Paper in 1939 restricting immigration to Palestine found the District militantly opposing its imposition by strong protests to the British and United States governments.

The Zionist District served the community well by bringing outstanding figures to speak in New London as part of its educational and cultural program. Such men as Bernard Rosenblatt;

Shmaryah Levine; Jacob de Haas; Nahum Sokolow; Ittamar Ben-Avi; Abraham Goldberg; Louis Lipsky; Maurice Samuel; Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise came to New London to expound the message of Zionism.

The efforts of the Zionist movement reached their joyous culmination on May 14, 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel. The removal of the displaced persons of Europe to Israel and the Arab invasion of the new State saw the local Zionist District turn all of its efforts toward the "Supplies for Palestine," "Food for Israel" Drives and the United Jewish Appeal Campaign.

In 1950 Morris Mallove, who is often referred to as "Mr. Zionist of New London," visited Israel and chose the site upon which the Zionists of this State helped establish Nachlat Connecticut.

The New London Zionist District is now embarked on the sale of Israel Bonds and the general fund raising programs so that Israel may continue to grow to be the haven of refuge for the thousands of Jews who must still be brought into the country—and to maintain it as a strong bulwark of democracy in the Middle East.

2. New London Chapter of Hadassah

In New London the Samuel Mohilever Camp, Order Sons of Zion, numbered among its members a "daughter of Zion," Ruth Soltz. She early became interested in the news of the founding in 1912 of Hadassah, a Women's Zionist Organization, by Henrietta Szold. Henrietta Szold had visited Palestine in 1909 and was profoundly shocked by the dreadful substandard health conditions there. She was determined to do something about this unfortunate situation and founded this new organization to fulfill this purpose.

When in the spring of 1915 Ruth Soltz attended a Zionist Conference in Boston and heard Henrietta Szold deliver the inspiring message of hope for "the healing of the daughter of my people," she returned home and on June 24, 1915, organized the B'nos Zion Club or the Daughters of Zion. In the beginning Hadassah was organized as a federation of existing "Daughters of Zion" Societies. Eventually the name "Hadassah" supplanted the "Daughters of Zion." The B'nos Zion Club formed the nucleus of the New London Chapter of Hadassah which drew its charter members from the earlier group. Needless to say, the first president was Ruth Soltz, the human dynamo, who in turn sparked others who in the years

to come were to carry high the torch and light the way for the scores of women who have found that working for the upbuilding of a National Jewish Homeland has brought them great spiritual enrichment. Other officers of the original B'nos Zion Society were: Vice President, Rose Schwartz; Recording Secretary, Lena Copeland; Treasurer, Bessie Shafner. The charter members also included: Hattie Soltz (Mrs. Max Soltz); Rose Abramson; Ida Solomon; Mrs. Abraham Agranovitz; Miss Bessie Blaskin; Miss Elizabeth Cherkasky; and Mrs. Samuel Levine.

In November, 1915 the B'nos Zion club changed its name to the New London Chapter of Hadassah and its charter was duly recorded. By December, the secretary could proudly record an enrollment of twenty-two members; plus the additional fact that the New London Chapter was included in the list of the first twenty chapters organized in the country.

The enthusiastic spirit of the New London Chapter was noted by the saintly Henrietta Szold in a letter to the Chapter's new president, Lena C. Kaplan. Dated March 1, 1917, Miss Szold wrote: "... Indeed I cannot express a better wish, for Hadassah, the Central Committee, and the New London Chapter, than this — that the New London Chapter may continue in the path hewn out for it under Mrs. Soltz's direction. That we may receive from it the co-operation hitherto accorded to us, and that your regime may bring about the fruition of all the plantings made by your chapter since its beginning. You have walked in a straight line with us up to this time, and I trust you will continue to do so until our whole movement has turned from seed into fruit.

"I consider it particularly valuable that Mrs. Soltz's co-operation and advice should have been secured, semi-officially at least, by placing her in the position of Honorary President . . . "

The local Chapter has a long history of moral and financial support of the projects of Hadassah. Large sums have been raised for the Hadassah Medical Organization which began in 1913 with the sending of two visiting nurses to Palestine and has grown into a great hospital network of diagnostic, curative, research and preventive medical service.

The New London Unit of Junior Hadassah, the young women's section of the General Zionist movement was launched in November, 1924 by Mollie Greenblatt Goldstein, an ardent Hadassah worker.

Eleven charter members enrolled at the initial meeting. Gertrude Abramson was elected president of the New London Unit. During the existence here of Junior Hadassah there was always a close association with the older sister chapter. Because of its four point program for training them to enrich their own lives and eventually take their place as future Hadassah leaders, the Junior group enjoyed great popularity for many years among New London Jewish girls in their late teens and early twenties. From Junior Hadassah many went on to join the Business and Professional Division of Hadassah. President of the latter group for several years was the late Jennie Greenblatt.

As early as 1918 several Young Judean Units were organized under the aegis of Hadassah. Active in this work through the years were Ruth Soltz and Mollie Greenblatt Goldstein.

Today, with well over 550 members, the local Chapter of Hadassah is the largest of the Jewish women's organizations in New London.

CHAPTER VII

"DRAW OUT THY SOUL TO THE HUNGRY"

Against the background of terrible suffering for the Jews in Europe and of the determined will of American Jews for centralized and comprehensive effort, the United Jewish Appeal was established as the single fund-raising body for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal and the National Refugee Service.

One of the strongest unifying forces in the New London Jewish community, the United Jewish Appeal was organized officially March 17, 1938 with representatives of all the local Jewish groups present at an organization meeting presided over by Rabbi Samuel Ruderman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth El. Since 1938, United Jewish Appeal has been a community project with the entire Jewish populace working to raise its prescribed quota.

The newly formed campaign organization launched a city-wide drive in 1939 to raise a quota of $10,000. Aron Agrin was elected chairman of the combined United Jewish Appeal campaign for overseas relief and rehabilitation, for the rebuilding and development of the Holy Land in Palestine and for the adjustment of refugees in the United States. He was elected for the second year to head the 1940 campaign with Louis Kaplan as co-chairman. In addition to the three major fund-raising organizations, the local campaign that year included the American ORT Federation (The Organization for Rehabilitation through training), the Histadruth and the Hebrew University in Palestine. This was a major step forward in combining the fund-raising efforts in New London. Rabbi Ruderman was appointed executive secretary and William Polinsky was elected first treasurer of the United Jewish Appeal, a position he was to hold for many years.

The two years following World War II produced impressive evidence of the responsiveness of New London's Jewish community to the plight of the remnants of their people in Europe and to the need of strengthening and expanding the Yishuv. In 1948 under the leadership of Eli Dane with co-chairmen Alex Shapiro, Eli Aronson and Moses Savin, the local United Jewish Appeal collected funds totaling $200,000.

The following years found New London's Jewry responding generously, contributing over $500,000 between 1949-1956.

As the years passed, the United Jewish Appeal campaign in New London increased the recipients to its allocations including Jewish War Veterans; Leo N. Levi Memorial Hospital; National Jewish Welfare Board; Hadassah-Youth Aliyah; American Jewish Congress; University of Connecticut Hillel Foundation; American Friends of the Hebrew University; American Technion Society; plus many additional American and Israel organizations and institutions. Of the total allocations, 90 percent is sent to Israel, while 10 percent is kept in the United States.

Men who have served as chairmen of the United Jewish Appeal in New London, in addition to those already mentioned, have included: Samuel Zabarsky; Morris Mallove; Oscar Dane; Abraham Kirschenbaum; Max Beit; Benjamin Kaplan; Dale Pollack; Milton O. Slosberg. Men who have assisted as co-chairmen have included: Charles Glassenberg; Samuel Chertoff; Perry Shafner; Charles Krinsky; Abram A. Washton; Seymour Hendel. Since 1952, Mrs. Harry Salomon has served as executive secretary while Joseph Wurman has been accountant for the United Jewish Appeal.

According to the records of the National Women's Division of the United Jewish Appeal; a Women's Division was organized in New London in 1947. Mrs. Morris Lubchansky and Mrs. Harry Goldstein were appointed co-chairmen. Mrs. Henry Harris served as treasurer and Mrs. Israel Resnikoff was secretary. Other women who have served as chairmen of the Women's Division have included: Mrs. Louis Rubin; Mrs. Alex Shapiro; Mrs. Moses Savin; Mrs. Samuel Gruskin; Mrs. Frank Goldstein. Women who have assisted as co-chairmen have been: Mrs. George Freeman; Mrs. Harry Resnik; Mrs. Jacob Lubchansky; Mrs. Perry Shafner; Mrs. Nathaniel Spitz; Mrs. Bernard Glassman; Mrs. Louis Kaplan; Mrs. William Lubchansky; Mrs. David Ginsberg; Mrs. Nathan Lubow; Mrs. Isser Gruskin. Those who have assisted as officers were: Mrs. Charles Glassenberg; Mrs. N. Max Solomon; Mrs. Harry Salomon; Mrs. Benjamin Kaplan.

Through the untiring efforts of these chairmen, both men and women; the United Jewish Appeal in New London has been able to aid in the tremendous contribution of American Jewry to the survival of the Jewish people. Not only did the United Jewish Appeal serve to raise the standards of giving to new levels, but it exerted a powerful influence in educating the Jewish community to a deeper understanding of its growing responsibilities in all phases of Jewish life.

CHAPTER VIII

"SEPARATE THYSELF NOT FROM THE COMMUNITY"

In New London, as in other cities in the new land, the earliest communal unit was the religious congregation, or the burial society. These were usually followed by the benevolent societies for mutual aid and the fraternal associations for recreation and companionship. The pattern of the organizational life has always been woven around the synagogue, the relief of the indigent and newcomer and social intercourse. [45]

1. THE NEW LONDON HEBREW LADIES AID AND EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

The New London Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, organized in 1901 was the first official Jewish charity organization. Before this group was organized, a small group of women and young girls took it upon themselves to take care of the needy. This group canvassed the Jewish community constantly and provided food, clothing, coal and other necessities for the needy. When the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society was organized, individual solicitations stopped and money was raised by sponsoring dances and other fund raising affairs all under the auspices of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society. The first meeting place was at 679 Bank Street. The officers of the Society in 1901 were: President, Ida Lubchansky (Mother of Attorney Morris Lubchansky); Vice President, Ruth Soltz; Recording Secretary, Rose Abramson; Corresponding Secretary, Lena Goldstein. The Society drew up a charter recorded July 23, 1903 which stated its purpose was "to promote social intercourse among the members and to bring them into closer communion with each other, to assist the weak, help the sick and extend aid to the worthy needy." Other charter members were: Hattie Harris; Sarah Hollandersky; Fanny Boyer; Libby Soltz; Ida Freeman; Rebecca Gordon; Fanny King; Rose Feldman; Jennie Kaplan; Sarah Lubchansky; Lena Baker; Fannie Gordon; Ida Protas.

Under the aegis of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, initial steps were taken in 1924 to unite the Jewish community in the establish-

ment of the first New London Jewish Community Center. The New London Day of July 9, 1924 wrote: "a concert and ball to be given by the New London Hebrews July 20 at Danceland, Ocean Beach will be one of the biggest social events of the season. The object of the dance and concert is to raise funds for the establishment of a Jewish Community House in New London....." With funds provided by individual members of the Jewish community and contributions given by the various Jewish organizations to the Building Fund, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, on August 13, 1925, purchased the Prest House at 60 Blackhall street which became the first Jewish Community Center in New London.

On March 5, 1926, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society amended its charter to state that its purpose was "to promote Biblical, religious and Hebrew Literary Education, to conduct religious services, to provide aid and comfort to the needy." The Society became known as the Hebrew Ladies Aid and Educational Society and the Community Center known as the Hebrew Institute. The creation of a Hebrew Institute was the realization of a long felt need for such an Institute in New London. The Institute was established and maintained by the entire Jewish community which gave donations in furniture and household goods to create a center of activities for the community and a school for Hebrew learning.

Besides giving aid to the needy, sick and aged in New London and the surrounding communities, the Hebrew Ladies Aid and Educational Society makes periodic trips to the Norwich State Hospital and to the Sanitarium at Uncas-on The Thames. These visits to the hospitals coincide with the holidays of Chanukah, Purim and Passover. The ladies bring delicacies and gifts to the Jewish patients. For a number of years, the Ladies Aid Society was affiliated with the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Hartford, Connecticut and many of New London's aged Jewish residents were admitted to the Hartford Home under the sponsorship of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society. In 1954, the Society became associated with the Jewish Home for the Aged in New Haven, Connecticut and assumed the responsibility of placing New London's aged Jewish residents in the New Haven Home. The Society's activities are supported by membership dues, a small grant from the Frank Loomis Palmer Fund and a grant from the New London Community Chest, of which the Society is the only Jewish member agency. During the seven year presidency of Dorothy Greenblatt (Mrs. Martin Greenblatt), the membership increased greatly and now numbers approximately 375

women. The Hebrew Ladies Aid Society will this year observe the 54th anniversary of its organization.

2. New London Lodge No. 295, Order B'rith Abraham

Just about the time that the ladies organized their charity society, the men formulated plans for their first fraternal Order; the New London Lodge No. 295, Order B'rith Abraham organized April 21, 1901. Meetings were held on Sunday evenings at Pythian Hall on Washington Street and at 151 Bank Street. Besides its chief purpose of providing social insurance benefits, B'rith Abraham sponsored dances and other socials. In 1904, Jacob Goldberg was president; Sol Ockooneff, secretary and Bernard L. Schaeffer, treasurer. The New London Day of November 12, 1905 wrote: "New London Lodge No. 295, Order of B'rith Abraham, instituted a fund campaign to aid victims of uprisings in Russia. President Louis Glater conducted the meeting at which $25.00 from the society's treasury was voted to start the fund." Following its peak year of 1913, B'rith Abraham declined in membership and soon after World War I disbanded in New London.

3. New London Independent Sick Benefit Association

Another early Society was the New London Independent Sick Benefit Association organized in August, 1902 "to establish a fund to provide for and help its members when sick and to bury them when dead and to hold a plot of land for a burial ground or cemetery." Morris Blaskin was elected president of the Society which provided an endowment fund, loans without interest to members and contributions to local needs.

4. Ladies Auxiliary of New London Independent Sick Benefit Association

In 1928 the Ladies Auxiliary to the Sick Benefit Association was formed with Rose Abramson its first president. The purpose of the Auxiliary has been the same as that of the Men's Association, in addition to visiting committees.

In January, 1955, Harry Hollander and Mrs. Joseph Glater were installed as presidents of the New London Independent Sick Benefit Society and its Auxiliary at a joint installation and dinner at Union Lodge Hall. Mrs. Harry Zamkow, the retiring financial secretary of the Auxiliary was presented a gift on behalf of the Auxiliary in appreciation of her twenty-seven years service in that office.

5. New London Literary and Beneficial Society

The New London Literary and Beneficial Society was organized December 19, 1903, with offices at 465 Bank Street. Its purpose was to provide mutual benefits and to foster social, literary and civic activities. Samuel Richmond was president and John Baratz secretary of this Society which disbanded after a few years.

6. Workmen's Circle Branch No. 109 (Arbeiter Ring)

In September, 1907, the New London Branch No. 109 of the Workmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring) was organized with fifteen members present. The Workmen's Circle has no president, a different member serving as chairman for each meeting. H. Milson was elected secretary and Aaron Goldstein was treasurer. Other charter members were: Hyman Gitlin; Solomon Eisman; D. Milson; David Levinson; Louis Brodsky. The following year the group bought a plot of land in the Jewish Cemetery in Waterford to be used as a private cemetery for its members. The original purpose of the Workmen's Circle was to function as a fraternal insurance society. Within two years the original group of fifteen grew to fifty members and with this came an increase in activities. Lectures in Yiddish were arranged with emphasis on the betterment of the life of the Jewish workers. In October of 1928, the local Branch opened a Yiddish school on Tilley Street with twenty-five Jewish children enrolled for the purpose of teaching them Yiddish literature and the Yiddish language. The children also were taught Jewish customs and ceremonies. The first teacher was Carl Fink of New York. A year later, the Branch bought land on Jefferson Avenue and built its own school and center of all its activities. The middle 1930's saw a noticeable drop in activities and in active working members, resulting in closing of the Workmen Circle School. Funds were almost gone and with no new workers to take the place of the older members, the building was lost. Despite the decline in membership, the New London Branch of the Workmen's Circle continues to engage in general welfare activities for its members.

7. Workmen's Circle Branch No. 809

In 1929, the wives of the members of the local Branch of the Workmen's Circle organized their own Workmen's Circle Branch No. 809, their activities being the same as the Men's Branch. Meetings were held at the Community Center on Blackhall Street and later at the Beth El Synagogue Center on Ocean Avenue.

Today, although activities are almost at a standstill, the Workmen's Circle Branch No. 809 still exists in New London, sponsoring educational and cultural activities for its members.

8. Young Men and Young Women's Hebrew Association

A branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association was established in New London about 1914 at the home of William Polinsky on Howard Street. The YMHA soon became the popular social club for the Jewish youth of New London. The Association rented its own clubrooms in the Neptune Building on State Street. The charter members were: Philip Shragowitz; Julius Sheriff; Morris Taner; Isser Gruskin; Harry Frischman; Nathan Levine; Oscar Silverman; Isadore Becker; Harry Gorchow; Herman Soltz; William Polinsky. A Young Women's Hebrew Association was organized in January, 1915 with the following officers: President, Nellie Kosakow; Vice President, Bessie Shalowsky; Secretary, Ida Snitkin; Treasurer, Sadie Shuman; Trustees, Rose Taner and Sara Kaplan. In a few years, the two groups combined to form a co-ed association. The YM and YWHA sponsored lectures, picnics and socials. There were also special program meetings in observance of the festivals of Chanukah, Purim and Passover. During World War I, before the formation of the Jewish Welfare Board, the YM and YWHA sponsored socials and cultural programs for the Jewish members of the armed services of the United States stationed in the New London area. A Passover program held Sunday evening, April 8, 1917, was attended by Jewish members of the Second regiment located in New London. The New London Day of December 14, 1917 wrote: "The YMHA gave an entertainment in Dart Hall for the soldiers and sailors stationed in this area. Cantor Lazar Kahn of Ahavath Chesed gave a lecture on the festival of Chanukah. Miss Rebecca Millson sang a solo, accompanied by Miss Lubchansky at the piano. A violin solo was rendered by Master Morris Wein, with Miss Mazie Cherkasky accompanist.

"Three sailors from the Submarine Base gave mandolin and guitar selections. One of the sailors danced the 'hornpipe' executing the dance number so skillfully that he was accorded generous applause. Music for dancing was provided by the Bulkeley Orchestra. Each sailor and soldier received a gift through arrangements made by the committee in charge of the affair..." The years between 1917 and 1919 saw membership in the Y decline as many of the

boys left New London to join the armed forces of the United States during World War I. Many of the men joined the Zionist District and the women became Hadassah members. Other factors also contributed to the loss of interest in the organization which disappeared from the New London scene in the late 1920's.

9. FRATERNITY LODGE, NO. 743, B'NAI B'RITH

On the night of September 22, 1913, twenty-six men met at the home of Emanuel Henkle to organize Fraternity Lodge, No. 743, B'nai B'rith. These charter members were: Emanuel Henkle; Nestor Dreyfus; Morris Lubchansky; John Baratz; Beno Spitz; Ludwig Mann; Simon Hess; Samuel Goldsmith; Samuel Kronig; Harry Hirsch; Thomas Soltz; Max Baratz; Max Abrams; Irving Lipton; Benjamin Baline; Louis Elfenbein; Max Soltz; Nathan Peck; Charles Hutzler; William Shmauk; Leo Kronig; Peretz Schwartz; Abraham Gordon; Louis Sharaf; Ezekiel Spitz; Max Solomon. Organized by German Jews in 1843, B'nai B'rith was the first of the many fraternal orders to be established in the United States. Emanuel Henkle was elected first president of Fraternity Lodge No. 743 whose prime purpose was to fill a desired need for social activity for the young Jewish men and women of the community. Following the formal organization and installation of its officers, a banquet was held in the private dining room of the Mohican hotel where a list of prominent speakers addressed the assembly. Among the guests and speakers at the banquet were: Rev. Dr. Joseph Silverman of Temple Emanu-El in New York; Bryan F. Mahan, then mayor of New London and Theodore Bodenwein, publisher of The New London Day. Fraternity Lodge helped maintain the various institutions supported by B'nai B'rith such as the Home for the Aged at Yonkers, New York; the Denver National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives; the Hillel Foundation and the anti-Defamation League organized in 1913 to combat anti-Semitism.

In 1914, the New London Lodge of B'nai B'rith organized a Sunday School for the Jewish children of the city. Classes were held in the old Coit Street school building and were taught by a group of women who volunteered their services. There was no tuition fee. The school was discontinued in 1917.

In May, 1933, Fraternity Lodge No. 743 was host to the B'nai B'rith District No. I, comprising Lodges in New York, New England and Canada, which held its eighty-first annual convention at the Mohican hotel. Wilbur Cross, then governor of Connecticut, was

the principal speaker. Fraternity Lodge, B'nai B'rith has taken an active part in raising funds and contributing donations for all causes that concern the people of New London; and continues to help build a fine Jewish community in New London.

10. New London Women's Chapter of B'nai B'rith

The Women's Auxiliary to Fraternity Lodge of B'nai B'rith was organized in January, 1921 with forty-nine charter members. Sadie Mann was elected president. Others chosen were: Mildred Lubchansky, vice-president; Elizabeth Cherkasky, secretary; Bessie Shafner Solomon, treasurer. The Auxiliary's duties has consisted of supplementing the philanthropic work of the men's lodge and assisting in carrying out the recreational program for the lodge. To the latter end, a variety of affairs, including musicals, dances, dramatic presentations, dinners and card parties have been sponsored by the women's Chapter. The social service work of the Auxiliary has been an important factor in providing for the welfare of the Jewish citizens of the city. Financial aid was given the New London Hebrew School, sponsored by the entire Jewish community from 1925 to 1932 in the Hebrew Institute on Blackhall Street.

Shortly after its organization in 1921, the Auxiliary reorganized the B'nai B'rith Sunday School, which had been discontinued in 1917. Classes for the new Sunday School were held in rooms in the Lena Building on State Street and later in the Union Lodge Hall on Union Street.

In September, 1924 under the aegis of the Women's Auxiliary, the Men's Lodge of B'nai B'rith formulated plans to sponsor Conservative High Holy Day services in New London. Rabbi Leon Lang of New York city and Cantor William Ancis conducted the first of these annual High Holy Day services at Union Lodge Hall. These Conservative services were sponsored by B'nai B'rith until 1932 when Congregation Beth El was organized.

A community service that has always been a source of satisfaction has been the annual Connecticut College scholarship, sponsored by the Auxiliary to help a deserving girl study at the College. Today, as in the past, the New London Women's Chapter of B'nai B'rith maintains a vital interest in Jewish and community affairs.

11. New London Branch of The Jewish Welfare Board

In 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I, representatives from twenty-two national Jewish organizations established the agency which eventually called itself the National Jewish Welfare Board. In training camps, at home, as well as in centers behind the lines over-seas, the Board conducted a variety of activities to meet the religious, recreational and personal needs of the Jewish soldiers, sailors and marines.

The New London Day of May 17, 1917 wrote: "A committee composed of Boris Ranow, David Alter, William Polinsky and Morris Mallove was chosen to assist in the work of raising funds toward the $100,000 which is to be secured for the Jewish board of Welfare Work in the Army and Navy."

In New London the YM and YWHA were instrumental in calling together representatives of all the Jewish organizations for a meeting in Dart Hall on Bank Street to form the New London Branch of the Jewish Welfare Board. Perry Hollandersky was appointed chairman of the New London Branch. Other officers chosen were Meyer Peskoff, vice chairman; Isidore Gruskin, treasurer; Elizabeth M. Cherkasky, secretary and Louis A. Shapiro, Town Representative. Rabbi Philip A. Langh was the first resident chaplain for the Jewish servicemen stationed in the New London area. Rabbi Langh conducted Friday evening and Sabbath services, Yahrzeit (Memorial) services, daily and High Holy Day services at the Jewish Welfare Board Headquarters at 130 State Street. The official dedication of the Headquarters took place in 1917 with Rabbi David de Sola Pool of New York as the main speaker. In the New London Day of Thursday, October 17, 1918 the Jewish Welfare Board "announced the reopening of its Friday evening religious services at 7:30 P.M. at its recreation center, 130 State Street. For the first time the Jewish Welfare Board extends an invitation to these services to civilians who are expected to be present in goodly numbers Friday evening. Refreshments will be served. Rabbi Maxwell Silver, the new resident chaplain of the local branch will speak at the services on 'The Inspiration of Judaism.' The general public and men in uniform, Jewish as well as non-Jewish are invited to attend."

Following the Armistice of November 11, 1918 which brought World War I to a close, a Victory celebration was held at the Jewish Welfare Board Recreation Center. The celebration consisted of a

big time vaudeville show, followed by a dance. The State Pier band played for dancing, refreshments were served and the entertainment was open to all men in uniform and their friends. The program was arranged by Hattie Harris, Perry Hollandersky and Rabbi Maxwell Silver, the resident chaplain.

The New London Day of Tuesday, January 14, 1919 wrote: "Sailors, stationed at the naval base in the New London district were the hosts last evening at a delightful dinner of appreciation to the members of the Jewish Welfare Board at the Welfare Board rooms on State Street. The affair opened with the singing of the Star Spangled Banner by the assembly. Rabbi Max Silver expressed his thanks, and the thanks of the organization to the boys. The efforts of the Jewish Welfare Board in the camps and bases of this country and in foreign countries were described by Perry Hollandersky, chairman of the Welfare Board. The work it has done in the present War for the welfare of the country's young men was vividly presented by Attorney Hollandersky . . . ."

During World War II the work of the Jewish Welfare Board increased greatly and together with similar agencies under the auspices of other faiths, constituted the officially recognized United Service Organization (USO) which supplied the needs of all the servicemen stationed in this area.

12. New London Post No. 160, Jewish War Veterans of the United States

New London Post, No. 160, Jewish War Veterans of the United States was instituted Thursday evening, May 21, 1937 at a meeting in the Mohican Hotel with twenty charter members. Willian Perry was elected commander and the other officers were: Senior Vice Commander, Harry Frischman; Junior Vice Commander, Carlos Stone; Adjutant, Frank Lann; Judge Advocate, Stanley A. Goldsmith; Quartermaster, Israel Marder; Chaplain, Maurice Orlian; Patriotic Instructor, Ida S. Stone; Historian, Simon Balkansky.

The national organization of Jewish War Veterans was founded in 1896 for the following purpose: "To maintain true allegiance to the United States of America; to foster and perpetuate true Americanism, ... to encourage the doctrine of universal liberty, equal rights, and full justice to all men; to combat the powers of bigotry and darkness wherever originating and whatever their target;. . . .to cooperate with and support existing educational insti-

tutions;. . . .to instill love of country and Flag;. . . .to preserve the memories and records of patriotic service performed by the men of our faith; to honor their memory and shield from neglect the graves of our heroic dead."

In cooperation with other posts throughout Connecticut, the New London Post was instrumental in preventing the activation of German-American Bund units within the State.

13. Ladies Auxiliary to the Jewish War Veterans Post No. 160

In 1938 the Ladies Auxiliary was organized with Ida Stone as its first president and with nineteen charter members. Others elected were: Senior Vice President, Frances Perry; Junior Vice President, Ida Pumerantz; Secretary, Fanny Orlean; Treasurer, Pearl Halpern; Conductress, Rose Lann; Chaplain, Katharine Snyder.

The Jewish War Veterans Post and Auxiliary fought anti-Semitism primarily by practicing and teaching patriotism. American flags were presented to Bulkeley and Harbor Schools, the Home Memorial Hospital, and American and Jewish flags were presented to all the local synagogues. The Russo-Finnish conflict saw the contribution of a large sum to the ambulance fund for Finland. Both the Post and Auxiliary make regular visitations to the Veterans Hospitals. The hospital program is an integral part of the activities of the Jewish War Veterans. Instrumental in initiating the formation of the New London Auxiliary Police, members of the Post and Auxiliary participated in one or more of the civilian defense projects. The Brotherhood Program instituted by the Post has become an annual part of New London's inter-faith observance. In conjunction with their Brotherhood program, the Post sponsors a Poster and Essay contest in the local high schools on the theme of "Brotherhood." Through its Child Welfare Project, the Auxiliary has donated a child's wheelchair to the Lawrence Memorial Hospital and a bed to the Mitchell Isolation Ward. Today, this Jewish service organization continues to serve faithfully the community, state and nation.

14. New London Jewish Association for the Aged

At a meeting held April 7, 1949 at the home of William Polinsky, the New London Jewish Association for the Aged was organ-

ized to formulate plans for affiliation with the New Haven Jewish Home for the Aged in New Haven, Connecticut. The Association provided residence and care for men and women over sixty years of age. Medical and nursing care has been provided for those who have been bedridden or chronically ill. To make this service possible, funds have been raised through annual membership contributions plus a substantial contribution from the New London Hebrew Ladies Aid Society. Residents have been billed according to the current maintenance charges. Applications have been processed by the local Association and then sent to the New Haven Home for final approval. Isser Gruskin was elected chairman of the Association.

In 1954 the New London Jewish Association for the Aged disbanded and the Hebrew Ladies Aid and Educational Society assumed the responsibility of placing New London's aged Jewish residents in the New Haven Home.

15. New London Chapter of the National Women's Committee of Brandeis University

In February, 1951, steps were taken to organize a New London Chapter of the National Women's Committee of Brandeis University. Mrs. Isser Gruskin was elected president when the first meeting and membership tea was held at the Lyman Allyn museum with sixty-two charter members present. The Women's Committee is solely a membership organization. The membership fee has been five dollars a year and there is no fund raising. The Committee holds two meetings a year and its purpose is to assume full responsibility for the equipment, maintenance, and expansion of the library of Brandeis University. Brandeis University was established in 1948 in Waltham, Massachusetts as the first secular and nonsectarian institution of higher learning in the United States under Jewish auspices.

16. New London Jewish Community Council

Ever since the organization of the Conservative congregation Beth El, the rabbis who served this congregation had made many futile attempts to unite the many Jewish organizations into one Council or Federation. The purpose of such a step would be to unify and coordinate the activities of the various organizations in order to eliminate duplication and conflict of activities. Its purpose

would also be to speak on behalf of the entire Jewish community when and if the occasion arose.

A successful attempt to organize such a group was in November, 1951 when, under the leadership of Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman, then spiritual leader of Beth El, the first Jewish Community Council came into being.

The objectives and duties of the Council as listed in its Constitution are: "to further the welfare of the Jewish Community. To coordinate the activities of the Jewish Community. To raise, collect and distribute funds for local, national and overseas Jewish causes. To foster and encourage cultural, welfare and youth programs . . . ." Fifteen local organizations have representation in the Council. Dale Pollack was elected first president of the Council and was succeeded by Joseph Wurman. Under the latter's leadership, the Council sponsored a forum series which brought to New London such outstanding personalities as John Roy Carlson and Congressman Emanuel Cellar. Moses A. Savin is now serving as president of the Jewish Community Council.

Several members of New London's Jewish community brought recognition to themselves and to their organizations by concerning themselves with Jewish activities on a State and National level.

In 1936, Mrs. Joseph Schwartz was elected to the presidency of the Women's Grand Lodge of District No. I of B'nai B'rith. Nestor Dreyfus is a member of the General Committee of District No. I of B'nai B'rith. In 1951, Moses Savin was president of the Connecticut Valley Council of B'nai B'rith. During his administration in this capacity he served as chairman of the B'nai B'rith Hillel House Foundation of Connecticut, the organization which was instrumental in bringing about the construction of the Hillel House at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut. As chairman, Moses Savin directed the fund-raising and the building of the structure. A plaque, placed on the front of the building reads: "Moses A. Savin Hillel House." Mrs. Seymour Smithline was president of the Department of Connecticut of the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary and is national vice president of that organization. Seymour Smithline is national chief of staff of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States. Hyman Wilensky served as commander of the State of Connecticut of the Jewish War Veterans;

is a national committeeman for the First Region of the Jewish War Veterans; a member of the Administrative Committee of the Connecticut Zionist Region; and was appointed to the Executive Committee of the Connecticut Jewish Community Relations Council. In 1951, Mrs. Arthur Ribner was elected president for a two year term, of the Connecticut Branch of the National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, and serves as a member of the National Board of the National Women's League. Since 1946, Ezekiel Spitz has been a member of the General Committee of the American Jewish Committee. In 1955, William Polinsky was appointed to serve on the National Council of United Hias Service, the Jewish international immigration agency.

CHAPTER IX

"THE WORK OF THY HANDS"

1. ECONOMIC LIFE

No immigrant group comes to a new land empty handed. Besides material goods it also brings along social and cultural values, traditions, habits, skills. These economic and technical experiences and abilities played an important part in the shaping of the destiny of the immigrant groups; especially in the case of the first and second generation.

The era which saw the arrival of the German Jew in New London (1860-1878) was the period of the economic evolution of America when the time was ripe for success. The German Jews consisted almost entirely of industrious, commercial elements who were able to adapt themselves quickly and easily to the new conditions of life and to attain advanced economic positions. These Jews were quickly absorbed in the American middle class. Industry, business acumen, a knowledge of the English language, and thrift soon enabled them to open retail stores. They earned their livelihood as clothing dealers; owners of dry goods stores; merchant tailors; dealers of "gents' " furnishings; "fancy" goods; jewelry dealers and milliners.

Much more difficult was the lot of the Jewish immigrant who came to America from Eastern Europe. Their arrival in 1885 brought little change to the economic picture in the first thirty years. These people were compelled at first to eke out a meager livelihood as pushcart peddlers. They had no money to start their own business, and their jobs were nonproductive. Fortunate were those who had learned a trade in the old country; the tailors, the carpenters, and other artisans would very quickly obtain employment. But the majority of the East European immigrants consisted of non-workers. Many hired out as unskilled laborers, finding employment in New London's silk mills and factories.

At the same period that these East European Jews came to New London, there was also a large influx of Irish, German and

Polish immigrants who also had to struggle to make a living. But the possibility of success still existed however, even for those who began with humble resources. In an expanding economy, Jews joined in the progress from pushcart to a settled line of business behind their own counters. Many successful storekeepers had begun their careers as peddlers, carrying merchandise on their backs. Later, having purchased a horse and wagon, through sheer industry and frugality, they had managed to save enough to open a small store. When these Jews from Eastern Europe arrived, the machine industry was growing rapidly, and they possessed neither the capital nor the business contacts to compete successfully with the native employers. They ran their businesses at a modest level, worked hard at long hours, earning a decent livelihood for themselves and saving to make the way easier for their children.

Many of the second generation took to schooling with avidity, and penetrated into the professions and into the rapidly growing white-collar classes. Of the sixty-three Jews gainfully employed in 1900, sixty were engaged in trade such as bakers; boot and shoe dealers and repairers; clothiers; dealers in dry goods; owners of second hand furniture stores; grocers; meat markets; milliners; paper stock; pawn brokers; tailors and watch repairers; while two earned their livelihood in the manufacture of caps and shirts. The year 1900 saw the first Jewish professional man, when Emauuel Henkle opened his office for the practice of medicine. In 1909, Max Boyer and Perry Hollandersky were admitted to the Connecticut Bar, the first Jewish lawyers to practice law in New London. By 1920 the East European Jews had entered many varied fields of endeavor. Of the forty-three Jews in new occupations, twenty-eight engaged in trade. There were booksellers and stationers; carpenters and builders; charcoal dealers; cleaners and dyers; restaurant owners; lighting fixture dealers; florists; flour and grain; furniture dealers; hardware; ice dealers; insurance and real estate agents; proprietors of rooming houses; plumbers; dealers in produce and newspaper dealers. Five skilled manufacturers made children's waists; baskets; harnesses; bed spring and mattresses. Ten Jews found their careers in the professions. There were chiropodists; dentists; lawyers and teachers.

Today one finds the Jews participating in almost every profession and occupation in New London. Of the 117 Jews gainfully employed in new occupations, 24 merchants had ventured into new

avenues of trade. There are auctioneers; dealers in automobile accessories; automobile dealers; owners of automobile garages; wholesale beverage distributors; operators of omnibus and motor coach lines; owners of dairies and creameries; dealers in store window display forms and fixtures; proprietors of finance companies; office supplies; dealers in musical instruments; phonograph and record dealers; book and commercial printers and a travel bureau. In 1955 six new manufacturers produced ice cream; metal products; truck bodies; underwear; washing compounds; the manufacture and testing of electronic instruments. Eighty-seven Jews chose new professions to become accountants; architects; directors of camps and children's day nurseries; dental technicians; elementary and high school teachers; pharmacists; music teachers; nurses; optometrists; draftsmen; engineers; physicists; mathematicians and a technical editor.

The following tables show the occupational distribution of the Jews in New London. The statistical data, taken from the New London Directories (1900-1955) are approximations since no precise data is available.

TABLE I

NUMBER OF JEWS GAINFULLY OCCUPIED IN NEW LONDON, 1900, 1920, 1955

Occupation	1900	1920	1955
Trade	60	145	152
Manufacturing	2	7	12
Professions	1	12	136

TABLE II

NUMBER OF JEWS IN NEW OCCUPATION, 1920, 1955

Occupation	1920	1955
Trade	28	24
Manufacturing	5	6
Professions	10	87

TABLE III

JEWS ENGAGED IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE, NEW LONDON, 1900, 1920, 1955, CLASSIFIED BY PROFESSION

Profession	1900	1920	1955
Accountants			7
Architects			1
Chiropodists		2	3
Dentists		2	10
Dental Technicians			2
Draftsmen			15
Engineers			29
Lawyers		3	20
Mathematicians			1
Music Teachers			2
Nurses			4
Optometrists			3
Pharmacists			8
Physicians and Surgeons	1	2	16
Physicists			3
Teachers		3	10
Technical Editor			1

By 1955 the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and their offspring had made an enormous advance in their economic status. Many had risen from the stage of wage earners to become large or small owners of businesses. Their children and grandchildren were occupying positions in the commercial, industrial and professional life of the city. The fundamental democracy of America had enabled them to find the level to which their abilities entitled them.

2. Population Trends

When the first German Jews arrived in 1860, New London's population was 10,116. The Jewish population of the city began to reach a distinguishable size in 1905 when there were four hundred Jews.[46] In 1932, the city's general population had increased to 29,640 with a total Jewish population of approximately 2,000.[47] By 1940, the Jewish number had increased to 2,200 augmented by a new group of Jewish refugees who had fled from Hitler's Germany

in 1939.[48] Today, there are approximately 3,000 Jews with a total greater New London population of 70,000.[49] (Today's figures include New London, Groton and Waterford.)

In their first area of settlement in New London, the immigrant remained a homogeneous group. Just as the other immigrants lived in separate districts of their own, so the Jews too, tended to stay among their own people.

Soon after his arrival in New London in 1860, Joseph Jacob Schwartz, the first Jew to settle here permanently, lived on Pearl Street while Elias Labensky made his residence on Golden Street and Samuel Goldsmith on Huntington Street. The German Jews lived in what was at that time the best residential sections of the city; Jay, Huntington, Golden, Pearl, Green and Tilley Streets.

Upon their arrival, the East European Jews lived on Potter, Bradley, John, Main and Federal Streets. This was known as the "Jewish section." Here the Jew did not feel alone among strangers, but rather safe among his own kind. Near him were all the familiar institutions that eased the adjustment to new conditions; the synagogue, the "Mikveh" (ritual bath) and the kosher butcher. Gradually, having acquired security in the form of steady employment, they moved to the newer and outlying sections of the city. But even in the new residential areas, the Jews had a tendency to move into the same neighborhoods.

In 1925 the Jews began to move away from the center of the city to the outlying districts. Though the majority of the families still stayed close to the synagogue on Federal Street such as Bradley, Shapley, Tilley and Huntington Streets, a number of families moved to Mountain Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Howard and Truman Streets. Several of them moved to Montauk and Ocean Avenues and to the streets running off these avenues. By 1940 the majority of the Jewish families lived in this section of the city moving out as far south as Thames Street. The trend of movement to the Ocean Beach area reached its peak in 1954 with 57.7 percent of the Jewish population of approximately 624 families living in the Ocean Beach section of the city which is in the Fifth Ward. This population shift has resulted in the building of the conservative Synagogue, Beth El, in the Fifth Ward which also fulfills the function of a center for most Jewish communal activities.

CHAPTER X

"HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT TO DWELL TOGETHER..."

1. JEWISH PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE

When Samuel Goldsmith was asked to serve as a member of the General Committee for the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the settlement of New London, May 5 and 6, 1896, he became the first in a long list of Jewish men and women who have participated in all phases of community life. New London's Jewish community has been represented in all fields of civic life and has played an important role in the political as well as in the cultural and professional life of the city.

In the 1870's the various service clubs recruited members from the young Jewish community. Elias Labensky and Hyman Hirsch were active in the Pequot Lodge of Odd Fellows which was organized in New London about 1875. Both men served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows of Connecticut. Hyman Hirsch was instrumental in bringing the State Odd Fellows Home to Fairview, Groton, and in 1881 he was also one of the organizers of Osprey Rebekah Lodge of New London.

Through the years Jewish members were found in the membership rolls of the Rotary, New London Lodge of Elks and Union Lodge of Masons and many served in official capacities in these clubs. Max Boyer and Jacob Sherb served as exalter ruler of the local Lodge of Elks, and Morris Lubchansky was president of the Rotary club in 1930. Merrill Dreyfus is president of the latter club at the present time.

The years of World War I saw the Jewish community engaged in veteran's service work through the Jewish Welfare Board in its clubrooms on State Street. Sixty young Jewish men from New London and vicinity served in the Army, Navy and Air Corps in the first World War. The entire community, Jewish and Gentile, mourned the premature death of twenty-three year old Harry Gorchow, killed in action on a battlefield in France. Harry was born in 1895 in New London and was the son of the Benjamin

Gorchows. Before entering the service, Harry had been a tailor and had been popular with a large number of the young people in the city. Four young Jewish women from New London also served in the Navy during the World War. Known as Yeomen F, they performed clerical duties at the various naval bases.

The Day of Monday, June 10, 1918 described the colorful patriotic celebration at which the Jewish community raised its flag in honor of their Jewish men and women in the service:

"The Jewish people of New London and vicinity have reason to feel proud of their celebration on Sunday, June 9 which was their patriotic contribution to the cause of world democracy. A service flag containing 60 stars was unfurled. Dr. Isaac Alcalay, chief rabbi of Servia, member of the Servian Royal High Commission spoke, telling of some of his experiences on the battlefields of France. He told of the heroism of many soldiers of Jewish descent. Other speakers included Ernest E. Rogers, mayor of New London; Charles H. Shapiro of Bridgeport, Henry C. Chappell of the war bureau, and Perry Hollandersky who presided at the affair. The exercises at Ahavath Chesed Synagogue were preceded by a street parade through Main and State Streets where the parade was reviewed at the municipal building . . . "

After the War, the Ku Klux Klan attempted to gain a foothold in New London and in 1924 when the Klan was at its height, the masked night riders burned crosses on the outskirts of the city, in Waterford and across the river in Groton. Their influence on the general community was negligible. As late as February, 1932, the Klan made another attempt to spread their doctrine but as before they met with no success.

When the Nazi regime began its ruthless campaign to exterminate the Jews of Germany, the community in New London arose in protest against the Nazi outrages.

The New London Day of March 29, 1933 wrote:

"On the night of March 28, 1933, members of the Catholic and Protestant denominations, as well as Gentiles of other creeds, joined with the Jewish community of New London and vicinity at a mass meeting at Bulkeley Auditorium to protest against the persecution of Jews under the Hitler regime in Germany. Attorney Max Boyer conducted the program attended by 800 people.

"Other speakers included the Mayor of New London, Malcolm M. Scott, who said that his protest against the Nazi outrages, rep-

resented the protest of the city of New London; State Senator Cornelius C. Costello; Attorney Max Sokarl; Rev. J. Beveridge Lee, Pastor of Second Congregational Church; Attorney Jacob Sherb; Rabbi Samuel Ruderman of Beth El; Abraham Gordon of Ahavath Chesed Synagogue . . . "

In October of 1939, vandals desecrated the Jewish Cemetery in Waterford. They wrecked thirty-five tombstones, overturning some and smashing others. They also desecrated some of the stones with the Nazi swastika. Many of the stones were five and six feet in height and a foot or more thick. These were toppled after pinch bars had been used to free them from foundations in which they were bolted. Above some of the graves were the markers of the American Legion and Jewish War Veterans, and these, as well as American flags, which also marked the last resting places of soldiers and sailors, were found trampled into the mud by the feet of the vandals. The hunt for the vandals was spurred by a $500.00 reward posted by aroused local Jewish residents. The reward for the capture and conviction of those responsible for the desecration of the burial ground was voted at a joint meeting of Jewish organizations at Ahavath Chesed Synagogue. However, the vandals were never apprehended.

In order to decrease community tensions the Jews took a willing part in every attempt to improve the understanding between the different religious faiths which make up the community. Congregation Beth El has been an active participant in the annual Brotherhood Week observed on a national scale during the week of Washington's Birthday. The pulpit of Beth El is visited by outstanding church leaders, while the Rabbi of Beth El reciprocates by speaking before Christian congregations. In February, 1940, Beth El contributed to the Methodist Church Mortgage Fund.

In 1950 the Men's Club of Beth El held a Distinguished Citizen Award Dinner at which an outstanding local person, chosen by a committee of townspeople, was honored. The late Katherine Blunt, then President Emeritus of Connecticut College was the recipient of this honor. The Jewish War Veterans Post also took an active part in the Brotherhood Week observance. In 1947, the New London Post, Jewish War Veterans presented a set of American Flags and post colors to the newly organized St. Mary's Post, Catholic War Veterans. This presentation as part of a veteran and brotherhood program brought the New London Post, Jewish War Veterans national recognition from the national organization of

the Catholic and Jewish War Veterans. As part of their Americanism program, the Jewish War Veterans Post and Auxiliary sponsors an annual Brotherhood program during the month of February. Representatives from all the veteran organizations in New London, Waterford and Groton; Jewish and Gentile, attend this meeting.

On February 16, 1953, Jewish religious articles were presented by New London's Jewish community to the United States Coast Guard Academy Memorial Chapel. Among the items placed in the chapel were the Sefer Torah and Ark, Menorah and Kiddush Cup. These were to be used for Jewish religious services should the need arise. Rabbi Leonard Goldstein of Beth El; Captain Joshua Goldberg, U.S.N.; Moses Savin, Cantor Richard Cohn and Academy officers officiated at the dedicatory service.

During World War II, the Jewish Community contributed fully to both community and nation. The servicemen who were stationed in the New London area found the doors of the Community Center on Blackhall Street wide open for both religious and social needs. Junior Hadassah girls served as Junior hostesses. Members of the women's organizations manned Booths, sold bonds, knitted for the Red Cross, served suppers at the USO; and sent packages to the men in service. In addition to local work, they undertook hospital visitations, Defense Council Activities, and the collection of clothes for UNRRA.

As in World War I, New London's young Jewish men saw action in World War II in the armed service of their country. Numerous medals were awarded for action combat, including the purple heart for wounds received in action. Five were awarded posthumously. Those who made the supreme sacrifice were: David Bernstein; Joseph Dolin; Israel Goodman; Charles Miller and Matthew Perry.

The New London Chapter of the Yankee Division Veterans Association, organized following the First World War; was renamed for Matthew L. Perry, the only New London boy from the Yankee Division (the 26th) killed in action in the Second World War. Five young women served in the Women's Auxiliary branches of the armed services during the Second World War, while a number of local Jewish men saw action again during the Korean conflict (1950-1953).

Many Jews have been active in civic affairs. They served as chairmen of the various Community Fund Drives; Red Cross, the

Tuberculosis Association Drive, the Heart Campaign, Salvation Army Drive, the Community Chest and Cerebral Palsy Drive. The Associated Charities, Visiting Nurse Association, Day Nursery, and hospital work have all received support from the Jewish women in the community. Mrs. Abraham A. Lubchansky served as president of the New London League of Women Voters. E. Victor Goldsmith, son of Samuel Goldsmith, was one of the organizers, as well as the director and treasurer of the Associated Charities of New London. (Now the Family Service of New London and vicinity). President of the Family Service today is Ralph Rakosky, now serving his third term; while Rabbi Goldstein of Beth El serves as a member of the Board of Directors. Moses Savin is chairman of the Board of the Community Chest of Greater New London, while Rabbi Goldstein served as its vice chairman in 1953. Maurice Grubner was president of the YMCA in 1946-47. Jews have led New London's Boy and Girl Scout Troops and Lawrence Hendel who was reelected president of Pequot Council of Boy Scouts for the second term is also on the executive board of the New England Region and a member at large of the National Council of Boy Scouts of America. Ezekiel Spitz was the recipient of the Silver Beaver Award of 1940 of the Boy Scout Council of America. Abram A. Washton served as president of the New London Parent - Teacher Association Council. Perry Hollander is the new president of the Council. Jews have served as presidents of the New London Chamber of Commerce. These were: Morris Lubchansky (1929); Ezekiel Spitz (1935); Maurice Grubner (1940); Louis Wool (1952); and Walter Baker (1955).

In the various branches of city and state government, Jews were elected or appointed to office in growing numbers and figured prominently in the areas of civic affairs and public service. During the administration of President Grover Cleveland (1892-1896), Hyman Hirsch served as internal revenue collector for the New London District. E. Victor Goldsmith was the first Jew elected to public office in New London when in 1912 he was elected to the School Board of Education. Others who served as members of the Board of Education were Ezekiel Spitz, Emanuel Henkle and Robert Henkle. During World War I Emanuel Henkle was medical examiner to the New London Draft Board. Since 1944, Morris Lubchansky has been chairman of the Draft Board. In 1929 Emanuel Henkle was president of the Board of United States Examining Surgeons which examined GAR veterans and veterans of the Spanish-American War, for requests for pensions and increase in

pensions. Aaron Elfenbein is prosecuting attorney for the city of New London. Louis Sokol was a deputy judge of the Police Court; while Police Court Judges have included Max Boyer, Isser Gruskin and Louis C. Wool. The present Judge of the Police Court is Abram A. Washton. In 1943 Ezekiel Spitz was appointed a member of the Ocean Beach Park Board and Isadore Tarnapol is on the city Planning Board. Morton Baratz was chairman in 1951 of the Housing Authority of which Harry Gordon is now a member. Alfred Labensky is chief of staff at the Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Moses Savin in one of the many capacities in which he has worked on behalf of the community also served as Director of Civil Defense. Morris Lubchansky, in addition to his many other duties; serves on the Ocean Beach Park Board, and is president of the New London County Bar Association.

In 1940, Fraternity Lodge No. 743, B'nai B'rith announced that $100.00 would be set aside towards a scholarship to Connecticut College for Women in honor of Morris Lubchansky on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, April 7, 1940.

New London has had two Jewish mayors. It was in 1948 that Samuel Selleck became the first Jew to reach this office and Moses Savin followed suit in 1952. At the present time Edward Henkle, son of Emanuel, holds the post of city manager.

The activities of New London's Jews extended to state offices. Morris Lubchansky was appointed United States Commissioner for the New London District and in 1931 he was elected to the Connecticut Legislature, the first member of the New London Jewish community to hold a state office. Perry Shafner was a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives in 1945, served as a Senator in 1949 and was also a member of the State Steamship Commission. Louis C. Wool is the new chairman of the Commissioners of Steamship Terminals. In 1953, Moses Savin also served his state as a member of the Senate. Isser Gruskin was appointed in 1949 as Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States.

2. Jews in the Professions and Sciences

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the children of the East European immigrants turn to the professions. By dint of hard work, by saving every penny and "by working their way through college," these second generation immigrants eventually became important figures in their chosen professions. The first

Jewish lawyer to practice in New London was Max Boyer, the son of Meyer and Fannie Blaskin Boyer. Max was graduated from Yale University in 1908 and was admitted to the Connecticut Bar in June, 1909. He became Judge of the Police Court and in 1929 was appointed prosecuting attorney of the New London Police Court. He identified himself with community activities and in 1928 and 1929 served as exalted ruler of the New London Lodge of Elks.

In October, 1909, Perry J. Hollandersky was admitted to the Connecticut Bar and became the second Jewish lawyer in New London. Born in New York city October 5, 1888, Perry was the son of Jacob and Fannie Hollandersky, natives of Russia. Perry received his LLB, degree at Yale in 1909. He was acting prosecuting attorney for New London from 1925 to 1927. Throughout the World War I period he was chairman of the Jewish Welfare Board in New London.

The promises of the New World offered new opportunities, new fields to pursue for the second generation immigrant. Many of them participated in the city's cultural life while others made important contributions to medicine and science. The musical life of the city received an added stimulus with the arrival of Victor Norman, pianist and conductor who came from Norway to America in 1940. He settled in New London in 1941 where he became choir director and organist of Congregation Beth El. In 1946 he organized the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra which has grown and continues to enrich the cultural life of this area under his leadership.

Of the many young Jewish men who entered the professions, some turned to higher Jewish learning, continuing their studies at one of the three Theological Seminaries; of this group, Rabbi Isidore S. Meyer is today librarian of the American Jewish Historical Society in New York.

Born in New London, November 19, 1903, Rabbi Meyer obtained his elementary school education and his preliminary Jewish education in New London. In 1918 he entered the Talmudical Academy High School of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (Yeshiva University), and was graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1925. He received his M. A. degree at Columbia University in 1928 and ordained as rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Since 1940 Rabbi Meyer has been librarian of the American Jewish Historical Society founded

in 1892 to collect and publish material bearing on the history of the Jews in America.

Prominent in the field of education is Bessie Bloom Wessel who was appointed to the faculty of Connecticut College for Women in 1918, seven years after the College was founded. Born in the Ukraine in 1889, Bessie Bloom Wessel was brought to the United States in 1891. A graduate of Brown University (Ph. B; 1911) she did her graduate work at Columbia University where she received her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. From 1911 to 1915 she was director of the Immigrant Educational Bureau of Providence, Rhode Island. In 1918 she joined the faculty of Connecticut College as instructor in economics and sociology becoming professor of sociology in 1939 and professor of social anthropology in 1945. In addition to her local, state and national appointments, she wrote articles on topics dealing with ethnic factors, published in scholarly periodicals, she wrote "An Ethnic Survey of Woonsocket, Rhode Island" and similar studies on the Jewish communities of New London and Norwich, Connecticut. Upon her retirement in June, 1954, Bessie Bloom Wessel was feted at a dinner honoring her thirty-six years of service as a member of the Connecticut College faculty.

In the field of medicine, the first Jewish doctor to make New London his permanent residence was Emanuel Henkle who opened his office for the practice of medicine in 1900. Emanuel Henkle was born in Moscow, Russia, August 18, 1874. In 1890, he came to the United States and found employment in a drug store in New York city. In 1899, he was graduated from Cornell Medical College with the degree of M.D. Emanuel was one of the founders and first president of Fraternity Lodge, B'nai B'rith. He also served as a member of the Board of Education and was active in civic affairs. He soon became one of the leading physicians and surgeons of the city. Emanuel's son Robert is today one of New London's foremost physicians while his son Edward, a lawyer, is city manager of New London.

An outstanding figure in the field of science is Reuben Leon Kahn, bacteriologist and inventor (1923-28) of the Kahn blood serum test for the detection of syphilis, a test now employed throughout the world. Born at Svir, near Kovno, Lithuania, July 26, 1887, Reuben is the son of Lazar Kahn who was cantor and shohet in New London from 1909 to 1920. During the time his parents lived in New London, Reuben was a student at Valparaiso University in Indiana and then a graduate student at Yale Univer-

sity. He received his D. Sc. Degree from New York University in 1916. A few years after his discharge from the United States Army in World War I, he became immunologist (1920-28) for the Michigan Department of Health at Lansing and Director of laboratories at the University Hospital. In 1928 he was assistant professor at the University of Michigan and at one time was faculty advisor to the Hillel Foundation at the University of Michigan. In 1937 Kahn received a gold medal from the Phi Lambda Kappa Medical Fraternity for his contributions to medical science.

Among the many American Jewish scientists whose labors brought important advances in public health is Calvin Calmon, one of the chemists credited with solving the problem of desalting sea water to make it drinkable. Born in 1908 in Bakst, now White Russia, Calvin Calmon came to New London in 1923 with his mother and two brothers. Educated in the local schools, he graduated from Bulkeley High School in 1930 and Dartmouth in 1934. He received his Ph.D. degree in Physical Chemistry from Yale University in 1938. At present he is head of the research and analytical laboratories of an industrial concern in New Jersey. When World War II broke out, his company was working on many important assignments for the government, one of which was the famous desalting kit which is used as standard equipment for all flying service personnel. In 1944 he entered the army where he served as chief of the Chemistry department of the Command Laboratory of the Armed Forces in the Southwestern Pacific Theatre. He received the War Department Commendation for the important part he played in the development of compounds for the effective removal of sea-water salts; thus making possible an "adequate supply of drinking water for castaways on the ocean."

An important milestone in the field of science has been the development of electronic devices and the manufacture of elecronic equipment. A noteworthy contribution to this science of electronics has been made by Edward Paul Schinman, president of Bogue Electric of Patterson, New Jersey and Dale Pollack, president of the New London Instrument Company, both manufacturers of electronic equipment.

Born in 1910 in Willimantic, Connecticut, Edward Schinman attended Bulkeley High School in New London and was a member of the graduating class of 1926. Edward was one of the honor ranking students at Bulkeley and was recognized as one of the most outstanding science and mathematics students ever to be graduated

from that school. He received a chemical engineering degree from Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute at Troy, New York in 1930. For several years he served as a consultant engineer with the Permutit Company of New York, specialists in water purification. A tuition scholarship of $225.00 to be awarded annually was set up at Rennselaer Polytechnical Institute by Edward Schinman in 1946. The scholarship provisions state that the $225.00 award will go annually to a Bulkeley School graduate, if the school has an eligible candidate. A pioneer in the manufacture of dynamos and generators, Edward Schinman launched a program of product diversification in the new field of electronics. For the world's first atomic submarine, the Nautilus, Edward Schinman's company devised an automatic system for monitoring bearing temperatures. The company also installed electric diving controls in the same revolutionary vessel. The Sea Wolf, the second atomic sub, is equipped with a Bogue-made power-control system.[50]

Dale Pollack was originally associated with the Templetone Radio Manufacturing Corporation in New London as chief engineer; later organizing a consulting engineering firm, which became the New London Instrument Company. In 1947 he became acting head of the Electronics Department of the Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovoth, Israel. He played a very important role in assisting the State of Israel during the trying days of the War of Independence in May, 1948, through the use of his knowledge in the fields of radio and electronics.

As indicated by Table I, page 60, there are today 136 Jewish men and women engaged in the professions in New London as compared to the one Jewish doctor in 1900 and the twelve Jews in the professions in 1920. Thus, in a short span of years, the Jews of New London had become intimately interwoven with all phases of life in their new home. Far from being "a separate" people, the Jewish community soon proved that though they remained loyal to their heritage and cared for their own, they rapidly became adjusted to their new environment and soon proved to be citizens capable of contributing to the general life of New London and the entire nation.

CHAPTER XI

"A GOODLY HERITAGE"

They came from the ghettos of Germany, Poland and Russia, these downtrodden men, women and children. They came across the ocean to the bright shore that is America, seeking a home, a haven of refuge. Tired of flight, of fleeing from one border to another, they turned their eyes to the future, leaving behind bitter memories of the past as they came searching for a dream and finding it in the land of the free.

Since the days of the first settlement of Jews in New London in the 1860's there has never been a break in the continuity of Jewish community life in the city. The religious link always remained the strongest in Jewish group identity. During the early years when only a handful of orthodox Jews were present, informal daily services were held wherever a place afforded. In later years, services were held in rented quarters on Bradley Street. As more Jews settled in New London, the need arose for a permanent house of worship and after earnest effort, the tiny community in 1905 raised sufficient funds to build a synagogue, forty-five years after the first group of German Jews settled in New London. As the Jewish population grew and moved further away from its first area of settlement near its first synagogue, two more orthodox congregations were established. Talmud Torahs were organized and the religious education of the young—of primary importance—was not neglected. As the years passed bringing with them changing conditions in all modes of life, the younger generation found expression for their religious beliefs by bringing to New London Conservative Judaism with its more modern forms yet retaining the warmth and strength of traditional Judaism.

As a united Jewish community, working together, its members organized fraternal orders for their social and recreational needs and welfare societies to care for the destitute at home and abroad. While firmly rooted in American life; the Jewish community is interested in helping to maintain the State of Israel as a haven for exiles from persecution, as a cultural center and a bastion of democracy in the Near East. Through the years, Jew and Christian

learned to work together. The inter-faith program encouraged closer relationships. The Gentile learned that the Jew was not a mystical figure of curiosity but the same as he, with the same failings, the same ambitions, with identical likes and dislikes. Each learned to respect the other's religion, his manner of worship. These Jewish settlers, most of them refugees, were enterprising, persistent in their economic ambitions, eager to take advantage of the freedom and opportunities of the New World. At no time were they aloof from the general life of the community. They helped in its development and as citizens took an active part in all its affairs. Their entrance into many new businesses such as the dry goods and department store, grocery and furniture stores and dress and shirt manufactures, helped change the economic pattern in New London.

In 1654, the first Jews to settle in America, landed in New Amsterdam, now New York. In 1954, the year of the American Jewish Tercentenary celebration, the Jewish community in New London, ever mindful of the blessings of freedom and prosperity that it has enjoyed in America, paused to reflect on its accomplishments during the past 100 years. They have truly striven to fulfill the meaning of the motto which served as the theme of the Tercentenary observance: "Man's Opportunities and Responsibilities under Freedom." They have been an integral part of American life and have worked with all other Americans in the never-ending search for the democratic way of life and for the light of faith. Their work in defense of freedom, for tolerance for all peoples and above all, their living religion have been among their proudest offerings to the American Community. They have succeeded in preserving the unique identity of the Jewish religion, worshipping in keeping with their historic traditions; and have preserved their ancient teachings, their ethics and their religious ideals in the free climate of a free nation. Philanthropy, always a binding ethical obligation of the Jew, has provided New London's Jewish community with a proud record of achievement. It has been generous in meeting the demands for succor and relief made by its stricken European brethren in the aftermath of two world wars and in the upbuilding of the homeland in Israel. Nor did they fail to remain aware of their responsibilities toward communal causes. The settlement of the Jews in the United States involved the struggle for broadening human rights for all. They sought security not in acts of tolerance for themselves alone but in the general assertion of the rights

of all Americans. Their continued involvement in the battles for other men's liberties was nourished by the awareness that in America there was no group that was not by some reckoned a minority and that all must be zealous in defense of their individual freedom. The threat to the civil rights of any minority group, whether of the foreign born or of negroes, also poses a danger to the Jews of America, since the privileges and safeguards in a democratic society either work for all without exception or for none at all.

One hundred years have nearly passed. New London's Jewry, still young, can proudly point to its achievements. Doctors; lawyers; scientists; teachers; merchants; manufacturers; musicians; philanthropists; the Jew has become an integral part of the American way of life, enriching with his contribution every field of endeavor. By maintaining in all their beauty and holiness, the customs and observances of Judaism, and through fulfillment of the moral law of his faith; he is loyal to the religious traditions of his forefathers. Active in civic affairs and public service, guarding his hard won civil and religious liberties, marching side by side with his Gentile neighbors in war and in peace, the Jew can truly say:

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;
Yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Psalm 16:6

APPENDIX

Lists of Presidents of Congregations and the various service organizations. It is possible that some names have been omitted because of a lack of complete records.

1. CONGREGATION AHAVATH CHESED

The first president of Ahavath Chesed was Samuel Cott. He was succeeded by Morris Blaskin; Solomon Glater; Solomon Ockooneff; Abraham Gordon; Meyer Boyer; Saul Meyer; Reuben Lubchansky; Samuel Itzkowitz; Morris (Moshe) Lubchansky; Wolf Selikovitch; Morris Feldman; Julius Charlop; Abraham Levinson; Simon Sulman and William Hahn (since 1944).

2. LADIES AUXILIARY OF CONGREGATION AHAVATH CHESED

Ida Solomon was the first president of the Ladies Auxiliary of Congregation Ahavath Chesed. Others who served as president were Mrs. Morris Rifkind; Mrs. Martin Greenblatt; Mrs. Lillian Prottas and Mrs. Eugene Wood (since 1946).

3. CONGREGATION OHAVE SHOLOM

The first president of Congregation Ohave Sholom was Louis Brodsky. Others who served as president were Benjamin Sherb; Aaron Sokol; Morris Sokarl; Harry Watchinsky; Iman Elionsky; Abraham Shapiro; Aron Agrin; Julius Daren; Simon Shifreen; Nathan Traystman; Samuel Shifreen; Solomon (Zalman) Gershowitz; and Abraham Traystman (since 1956).

4. LADIES AUXILIARY OF CONGREGATION OHAVE SHOLOM

The first president of the Ladies Auxiliary of Congregation Ohave Sholom was Mrs. Rose Sokol. Others who served as president were: Mrs. Elizabeth Rutman; Mrs. Pearl Elion; Eva Rutberg; Ettie Sokarl; Fannie Watchinsky; Mrs. Samuel Blonder; Mrs. Simon Shifreen; Mrs. Isidore Belgrod; Mrs. David Wool; Mrs. Bernard Kaplan; Mrs. Isidore J. Kaplan; and Mrs. Hugh Devlin (since 1956).

5. CONGREGATION BETH EL

The first president of Congregation Beth El was Nathan Lubow. He was succeeded by Aron Agrin; Benjamin Kaplan; Oscar Dane; Charles Suisman and Walter Baker (since 1956).

6. SISTERHOOD OF CONGREGATION BETH EL

The first president of the Sisterhood of Congregation Beth El was Lena C. Kaplan. Others who served as presidents have included Mrs. Morris Lubchansky; Mrs. Moses Savin; Mrs. Harry Elion; Mrs. Henry Harris; Mrs. Charles Krinsky; Mrs. Samuel Selleck; Mrs. Arthur Ribner; Mrs. Morris Sulman; Mrs. Theodore Daren; Mrs. David Schneider; Mrs. Seymour Smithline and Mrs. Ralph Rakosky (since (1956).

7. MEN'S CLUB OF CONGREGATION BETH EL

The first president of the Men's Club of Congregation Beth El was Morris Lubchansky. He was succeeded by Max Boyer; George Lubow; Merrill Dreyfus; Charles Krinsky; Harry R. Elion; Melvin Freedman; Walter Baker; Edward Chesler; Sidney Baron and Alfred Braunstein (since 1956).

8. NEW LONDON ZIONIST DISTRICT

Men who have served as presidents of the New London Zionist District have been: Ezekiel Spitz; Louis Brodsky; Isaac Resnikoff; Leon Kopelovitz; Morris Mallove; Charles Schuman; Meyer Peskoff; Marcus Falk; Harris Gordon; Samuel Chertoff; Nathan Lubow; Rabbi Samuel Ruderman; Max Sokarl; Rabbi Myer Kripke; Eli Aronson; Abram A. Washton; Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman; Henry Bernstein and Julius Lynn (since 1954).

9. NEW LONDON CHAPTER OF HADASSAH

The first president of the New London Chapter of Hadassah was Mrs. Joseph Soltz. Others who served as president have included Lena C. Kaplan; Miss Tillie Gordon; Mrs. Frank Goldstein; Mrs. Samuel Selleck; Mrs. Louis Sharaf; Mrs. Leon Dorsky; Mrs. Belle Lubow; Mrs. William Perry; Mrs. William Hendel; Mrs. Harry Resnik; Mrs. Anne Herman; Mrs. Isidore Belgrod; Mrs. Harry Goldstein; Mrs. Robert Gaines; Mrs. Alex Shapiro; Mrs. Eli Swatzburg and Mrs. Mischa Mandel who has been president of the local Chapter since 1954.

10. NEW LONDON HEBREW LADIES AID AND EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

No complete records, previous to 1930 are available for lists of presidents of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society. The first president of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society was Ida Lubchansky. She was succeeded by Lena Goldstein; Hattie Harshowitz (Harris); Mrs. Rose Sokol; Mrs. Louis Lampert; Mrs. Harry Salomon; Mrs. Samuel Blonder; Mrs. George Sadinsky; Mrs. Martin Greenblatt and Mrs. Harry Kushner (since 1955).

11. FRATERNITY LODGE, No. 743, B'NAI B'RITH

No complete records, previous to 1939 are available for lists of presidents of Fraternity Lodge, B'nai B'rith.

The first president of Fraternity Lodge, B'nai B'rith was Emanuel Henkle. Others who served as president were Nestor Dreyfus; Ezekiel Spitz; Morris Lubchansky; Nathan Morris; Jacob Russ; Morris Horowitz; Nathan Lubow; John Baratz; Max Hertz; Benjamin Kaplan; Julius Sheriff; Simon Balkansky; Alfred Braunstein; Louis Kaplan; Moses Savin; Abram A. Washton; Bernard Richman; A. Arthur Ribner; Lawrence Hendel; Murry Gruskin; William Cohen; Charles Krinsky; Burton Federman; Max Laurie; Avery Zuckerman; Stanley Hendel and Edward Perry (since 1956).

12. NEW LONDON WOMEN'S CHAPTER OF B'NAI B'RITH

The first president of the New London Women's Chapter of B'nai B'rith was Sadie Mann. She was succeeded by Mrs. Morris Lubchansky; Mrs. Joseph Schwartz; Mrs. Louis Kaplan; Lena C. Kaplan; Sadie Spitz; Mrs. Morris

Horowitz; Mrs. Rose Schwartz; Mrs. Jennie Kamsler; Mrs. Victoria Glassenberg; Mrs. Bernard Glassman; Mrs. Anna Quint; Mrs. Louis Rubin; Mrs. Leon Dorsky; Mrs. Harold Peck; Mrs. Arthur Ribner; Mrs. Jack Kaplan; Mrs. Daniel Hendel; Mrs. Abraham Lubchansky; Mrs. Moses Savin; Mrs. Lawrence Hendel; Mrs. Morris Sulman; Mrs. Joseph Dembo; Mrs. Israel Resnikoff; Mrs. David Ginsberg; Mrs. Max Laurie; Mrs. Harry Dean; Mrs. Herbert Schenk and Mrs. Louis Sokol (since 1956).

13. NEW LONDON POST No. 160, JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES

The first commander of the New London Post No. 160, Jewish War Veterans was William Perry. Others who served as post commanders were: Simon Balkansky; Morris Federman; Benjamin Pumerantz; Leon Dorsky; Frank Lann; Louis Sokol; Hyman Wilensky; Ralph Bernstein; Harold Weiner; Seymour Smithline; Norman Serotta; Theodore Daren; Leo Wilensky; Jules Berkowitz and Jacob Soltz (since 1956).

14. LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE JEWISH WAR VETERANS POST No. 160.

The first president of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Jewish War Veterans Post No. 160 was Ida Stone. She was succeeded by Mrs. Rose Balkansky; Mrs. Gertrude Horen; Mrs. Esther Goldberg; Mrs. Morris Federman; Mrs. Theodore Daren; Mrs. Seymour Smithline; Mrs. Ralph Bernstein; Mrs. Samuel Bernstein; Mrs. Norman Serotta; Mrs. Edward Chesler; Mrs. David Blonder; Mrs. Joseph Burnstein; Mrs. Russell Baline and Mrs. Jules Berkowitz (since 1956).

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Due to the lack of complete records and the need to often rely upon the recollections of individuals, we wish to apologize for omissions or errors which were inadvertently made.

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