PORTLAND JEWRY

Its Growth and Development

by

Benjamin Band



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JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Portland, Maine

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Portland, Maine

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FOREWORD

For many years, Walter G. Davis, president of the Maine Historical Society had urged upon his Jewish friends the desirability of a recorded history of the Jewish community of Portland; but the idea lay dormant until announcement was made of the Tercentenary Celebration of 1954, to commemorate the three hundred years of Jewish settlement in the United States. Local attention was then focussed upon the need, as well as the desirability of bringing the idea of Mr. Davis into fruition. Such history of Portland Jewry would be a fitting and opportune implementation of the Tercentenary Celebration.

On January 14, 1953, a request was made of the board of directors of the Portland Jewish Federation to sponsor and finance a preliminary study to ascertain the availability of source material for a historical study of Portland Jewry. This request was received with enthusiasm and the necessary funds were appropriated. Benjamin Band, a scholar whom we were fortunate to have in our midst, was engaged to make the introductory study. A month later he reported to the Federation that sufficient, hitherto unexplored material had been uncovered to provide the basis for, and to justify, a thorough study of the religious and communal life of Portland Jewry from its earliest beginning, ninety years ago.

With the imprimatur of the Federation, the Jewish Historical Society of Portland, Maine, was organized under the laws of the State of Maine, as an educational corporation, on June 17, 1953. Its purposes are, as noted in the certificate of incorporation, to stimulate interest in local Jewish history through the collection and publication of materials bearing on the growth and development of the Jewish community; and to encourage the preservation of all community records and source materials, for the edification and guidance of future generations.

Mr. Band was then engaged to continue his research and write the story of the birth and growth of the Jewish community as nearly accurately as was possible from the available material. In the winter of 1953, he submitted his first draft of the manuscript to the Society. Copies were submitted to a few of the oldest Jewish

settlers for comment and suggestions. In the fall of 1954, revision was begun by an editorial committee consisting of Lewis H. Kriger, chairman; Edith Briggs Meyers (Mrs. Harold), and Earl Aronson. Assisting them at the weekly meetings were Mr. and Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Abraham S. Levey, Arthur M. Waterman, Mr. Band, and Jules Krems. Mr. Krems assisted Mr. Band in further efforts to search and record historical data. The text was edited, rewritten in part and prepared for the printer.

By the very nature of the project, it was necessary to set an arbitrary deadline for the inclusion of historical data in the text. December 31, 1954 was established as the closing date.

The study owes its successful completion not only to those who helped prepare the manuscript, but also to the many persons who financed the work of the Society and graciously consented to sponsor the publication of the book. Their devotion to this work is also a part of the history of Portland Jewry.

With the completion of its first project, the Society enters upon a new phase of its existence. Its historical interest in Jewish life will continue with the publication of future supplements to this book. The assistance of all interested persons in this worthy endeavor will be welcomed.

ISRAEL BERNSTEIN, *President*
Jewish Historical Society
of Portland, Maine

PREFACE

It is almost impossible to reproduce on paper the life of a community with all its color, detail and imagery. Just as an artist creates with lines, patterns and dabs of color, relying on the peculiar structure of the human eye to translate them into a total picture, so the historian, no matter how complete his source material may be, can only point out the salient features of his subject and arrange them in such a manner as to convey a picture of a fragment of social life.

The present attempt at a history of Portland Jewry is a direct result of the recent Tercentenary Celebration of Jewish settlement in America. As part of the program of this celebration, all Jewish communities were urged to compile the record of their settlement and growth, thus furnishing historians of American Jewry the bricks and mortar for a more elaborate synthesis of Jewish experience in this land.

We acknowledge with thanks the assistance rendered by many local organizations and individuals, and the guidance offered us by the American Jewish Historical Society and its librarian, Dr. Isadore Meyer, the American Jewish Archives, the Maine Historical Society and the Portland Public Library.

A special note should be made of the invaluable assistance rendered by Jules Krems, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Portland. During the period of original research and especially when the manuscript was being revised, Mr. Krems helped in gathering and checking the information dealing with community life.

There are several lacunae in the present record which are due to the lack of authentic records for certain periods, organizations and activities. It is to be hoped that future historians, basing their efforts on the present pioneer work, will succeed in filling the gaps, recovering material that was not accessible to the preesnt researcher and correcting and amplifying the present record.

If the present study, defective as it may be in parts, will serve to create a greater interest on the part of Portland Jewry in the past and present experience of the community, it will have

fulfilled its task. And if it will encourage others to continue in this field, to search out new sources and to preserve present records, experiences and memories for the historians of the future, the labor entailed in the compilation of this study will have been doubly rewarded.

December 31, 1954

BENJAMIN BAND

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CHAPTER I

PRELUDE

The coast of Maine was carefully explored during the 16th Century and the early part of the 17th Century by Spanish, French and English adventurers. In 1614 John Smith prepared a map of the area and named the territory New England, but no English settlements were made in this region until the period between 1623 and 1629.

The first settlement on the site of present-day Portland was made in 1633 by two Englishmen, George Cleeve and Richard Tucker. The hill at the east end of the peninsula soon became the property of George Munjoy and the area on the west side that of George Bramhall. Shortly thereafter, the independence of the territory was threatened by encroachments of the powerful colony of Massachusetts, which succeeded in extending its jurisdiction over this part of Maine in 1658 and in later years gradually gobbled up other portions.

From 1658 the peninsula settlement, now known as Falmouth, developed rapidly until checked by the bloody Indian massacres in 1676. In 1690 French and Indian attackers destroyed the town, and it was not resettled until 1719. A few years later, with the addition of some neighboring territory and Cape Elizabeth, it was reconstituted as a new town called Falmouth.

During the War of Independence, Falmouth enthusiastically sided with the rebels and was repaid for its sentiment by a severe bombardment from British naval vessels. Several years after the war, in 1786, the peninsula portion of Falmouth was reorganized as a separate town named Portland.

When Maine was detached from Massachusetts and became an independent state in 1820, Portland became its first capital and remained such until 1831. Its development for thirty years was peaceful and orderly, only to be brought to a temporary standstill by another catastrophe reminiscent of the previous ones. As a result of a Fourth of July celebration in 1866, a fire destroyed an area of about two hundred acres, including the central part of the city. After a slow recovery from this disaster, Portland began to develop rapidly. Between 1890 and 1940 its population doubled

and its leadership in Maine's social, economic and cultural life has remained unchallenged.

The growth of the Jewish Community of Portland, which will be traced in detail in subsequent chapters, has been recorded inadequately by Jewish historians. The reason for this is twofold: Maine was considered as being beyond the periphery of the general history of American Jewry, and the source materials of early Jewish life were few and often hazy.

In order, therefore, to throw light on a hitherto obscure chapter of Jewish life in America, it is often necessary to reconstruct the history of the earliest periods from oral traditions, old directories, chance references in contemporary literature and a few scraps from authentic records.

It is generally conceded by Jewish historians that the settlement of Jews in Maine is comparatively recent. In fact, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* which was published early in the present century had no article on Maine Jewry. Furthermore, in its estimates of Jewish population, this standard reference work did not credit Portland with any Jews as late as 1905.[1] Even the newer *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* failed to penetrate the pre-1900 fog.[2]

Although the sources are fairly silent about Jewish life in Maine before the 19th Century, there are scattered references to Jews in the extant literature. Thus a modern historian of Maine writing on the earlier period says:

> At an early period Jewish settlers appeared in Maine, the first of them in pre-Revolutionary days. Early in the 18th Century, Jews of Spanish, Portuguese and German origin appeared in Bangor, on the Cranberry Isles and at Islesboro. The families of Lowe, or Levi, were among the first. Their descendants of the Lowe and Lurvey families still live in Hancock County.[3]

During the colonial period and shortly thereafter, Jews experienced great difficulties in their efforts to settle in regions of New England beyond Rhode Island. As Jacob Marcus writes:

> The original Puritans were interested in Hebrew and in ancient Hebrews . . . but not in their descendants as long as they remained Jews.[4]

Even Christians who did not conform with the established church as it existed in Maine and Massachusetts were persecuted.

As a case in point, consider the difficulties of William Scriven who sought to introduce the Baptist movement in Maine and was severely treated for his pains. In 1682 he was ordered not to speak in favor of Baptism or to hold private religious exercises. He was further directed to observe public worship in Kittery according to the established law. When he refused to conform, he was then ordered to leave the province.

When Roger Williams was driven from Massachusetts in 1635 by intolerant rulers of that colony, he fled to Rhode Island where he laid the foundation for a settlement that would be free of bigotry. It was thus to Rhode Island that Jews and other nonconformists were attracted, the Jews establishing their first community in Newport in 1658. Those who ventured farther north into Massachusetts, or the region of present-day Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, were frequently harassed and made unwelcome. In time they either moved or converted. Thus, in late 17th Century and 18th Century documents, mention is made of the Moses and Abrams families in Maine or New Hampshire who were listed as "descendants of Jews."[5] It also accounts for the fact that many leading Massachusetts families bear Jewish names.[6]

The conditions described account for the unevenness of Jewish settlement in New England until the middle of the 19th Century. Only Rhode Island stood out as a center of Jewish life. This was even noted by a seventeenth-century traveler who made no mention of Jews in his memoirs of New England until he came to Rhode Island. There, he observed, "most of the men are either Quakers or Jews."[7]

The first United States Census, for the year 1790, reported fourty-four persons in Maine presumed to be Jewish. Although this estimate has been challenged as excessive, it cannot be denied that Jews were settled in Maine. The only Jew of whom anything definite is known was Susman Abrams, a native of Hamburg, Germany, who came to Maine during the post-Revolutionary period. Abrams lived for a time in Waldoborough and Thomaston before settling in Union where he operated a tannery until his death in 1830, at the age of eighty-seven. Although he married a Christian in 1810 and attended public worship in Union, Abrams professed faith in Judaism alone and abstained from hard labor on Saturdays, working often secretly on Sundays.[8]

It is true, nevertheless, as Leon Huehner has pointed out, that prior to 1800 Maine did not have any Jewish community, although Jews lived there.[9] For, Jewishly speaking, a community is said to

exist only when at least ten adult males are available for a *minyan*, or quorum for public prayer.

During the early part of the 19th Century efforts were made by Jews to settle in Maine in considerable numbers. Thus we learn of the formation of a community in Bangor in 1829. In 1834 there came into being a "Bangor Hebrew Center" and there is also reference to the organization of a "Congregation Ahawas Achim" in Bangor in 1849 with the purchase of a burial ground in the same year. Furthermore, a Jewish cemetery is known to have existed in Waterville as far back as 1830.[10]

As for Portland, local sources do not mention the presence of a Jewish community in that early period. In 1817 a Female Society of Portland was organized to collect money for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. And in 1823 a Portland branch of this society was formed. In the original constitution and other papers published that year, no mention is made of Jews in Portland and the principal activity of the Society was fund raising for other branches. The only information found therein on Jews in America is the general statement:

> In the United States are 3000 Jews. They are found principally in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston and Savannah.[11]

If any Jews were living in or near Portland, they were not organized so as to come to the attention of the society.

During the next few decades Jewish peddlers operating out of New York or Montreal worked their way through Maine. They even advertised in the newspapers of Bangor[12] but can in no way be regarded as constituting part of a Jewish population in Maine.

City directories of Portland from 1843 to 1860 list some persons with Jewish-sounding names but there is no other ground for assuming that they were Jews. It was still current practice for New Englanders to have Hebrew given names, even surnames, and the occasional mention of names such as Jacobs, Straus or Levi, is no sure indication that these persons were Jews.

According to the "oral tradition" of the Jewish settlers who came to Portland in the 1860's and 1870's, there were some Jews in Portland when they arrived but these were already assimilated. They had no interest in Jewish affairs and ceased to call themselves Jews. It is quite possible that the presence of these earlier arrivals accounts in part for the apparently German or Jewish names found in the city records.[13]

In general, we may say that until 1860 there is little in the records to indicate the existence in Portland of a stable Jewish population. From this point onward the real history of Jewish life in Portland takes root.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER I

[1]**The Jewish Encyclopedia**, New York, 1906, Vol. XII, p. 372.

[2]**Universal Jewish Encyclopedia**, New York, 1939-41, Vol. VIII, p. 604.

[3]**Modern Maine**, Richard Hebert, New York, 1951, Vol. I, p. 418.

[4]**Early American Jewry**, Jacob R. Marcus, Phil., 1951, Vol. I, p. 103.

[5]**The Jewish Encyclopedia**, New York, 1905, Vol. IX, p. 241.

[6]**Ibid.**, Vol. VIII, p. 372.

[7]"Memoirs of M. DeLa Mothe Cadillac, Concerning Acadia and New England, 1692," in **Collections of the Maine Historical Society**, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, p. 288.

[8]**History of the Town of Union, etc.**, J. L. Sibley, Boston, 1851, p. 110.

[9]**Publications of American Jewish Historical Society**, Vol. XI, **"The Jews of New England Prior to 1800."** Huehner also notes (p. 95): "In connection with Portland, Maine, mention is made in 1804 in a letter of Commodore Preble, of a Lt. Joseph Israel who fell before the walls of Tripoli, but there is nothing to show whether he was a Jew."

[10]**Maine: Resources, Attractions and its People**, 5 Vol., edited by Harrie B. Coe, New York, 1928, Vol. II, p. 267; also Hebert, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 418-19.

[11]**"The Constitution of the Portland Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, etc."**, Portland, 1823, p. 14, in the library of the Maine Historical Society.

[12]Dr. Lee M. Friedman, in a letter to the author, dated February 3, 1953.

[13]According to Simon Wolf, only one known Jewish soldier from Maine fought in the Civil War. **Publication of American Jewish Historical Society**, Vol. 3, p. 38. He has been identified as Captain A. Goldman of Maine's 17th Infantry Regiment.

CHAPTER II

THE PIONEERS

"A quarter of a century ago, there was no representative of the Jewish Church in your city." Barnard Aaronson so prefaced his statement on Jewish life in Portland as the Jewish representative for the Portland Centennial in 1886. He pointed out that only twenty years earlier, in 1866, did Jews begin to settle in Portland in noticeable numbers.

Barnard Aaronson was one of those pioneers. He came in 1866 from Boston where he had lived many years, and where he had been a member of the Jegar Sehadutah Lodge, B'nai B'rith, since 1857. With him arrived several other families and individuals including his father, the Rev. Aaron Aaronson. Later he was joined by his brother-in-law, Joseph H. Wolf.

Others had preceded these founders of a new Jewish community. Among them was Joseph Levy, formerly of Germany, a "merchant tailor" since 1860. A clothier, Edward Laveen (or Levene) and a few peddlers, apparently Jewish, also were at hand. The tendency of many Jewish immigrants to enter the junk peddling business is an Ariadne's thread in our efforts to locate the earliest Jewish settlers.

During the late 1860's, Simon and William Shine moved to Portland after a brief residence in nearby Standish, Maine. Simon, born in Breslau, Germany, in 1848, settled in Standish in 1864. His brother, William, joined him in 1866.

Other arrivals in the 1860's who can be identified were Abram Margofsky, Isaac and Simon Santosky. Most of the settlers from this period onward came from Poland and Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire.

Among the settlers during the early 1870's were Judah Rosenberg, Shiah Berman and the brothers Jacob and Isaac Judelsohn. Rosenberg came with his family from Markoff, Poland. On September 15, 1873 his wife, Rebecca, bore a son, Samuel, the earliest recorded birth in the new Jewish community. Shiah Berman and his son-in-law, Jacob Judelsohn, brought with them the scholarly tradition of the Russian-Polish *yeshivot* and they served as standard bearers of the Talmudic tradition. Jacob Judelsohn

died in Portland in 1942, at the age of ninety-two.

The young community established ties with the other small Jewish communities in Maine very rapidly. In 1874 it suddenly emerged as the seat of a B'nai B'rith Lodge, drawing its membership also from Bangor, Lewiston and Waterville. By that time there were between twenty and thirty Jewish families in Portland.

Among the persons not previously mentioned who were already established in Portland by 1874 were Israel Aaronson, Samuel Abrahams, Isaac Abrams, Wolf Bergman, Samuel De Groot, Moses Fonsaca, M. Herzberg, Zorach Hirshon, Samuel Kahn, Samuel Levi, Harry Levin (or Henry Levin), Samuel Mathias, Solomon Schryver, William Schryver, Morris Stearns, William Sulky (or Solkay), Morris Wolf, Nathan Wolf, Philip Wolf and Reuben Wolf.

These early settlers soon acquired an excellent grasp of the English language, for it was a matter of great necessity for them in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish city. It is also significant that they learned to read and write English well. The minutes of the Portland Lodge, Independent Order B'nai B'rith, from 1874 to 1880, were written in English with many persons serving as recording secretary. Throughout this well preserved record, there is an even correctness in style and English usage and evidence of the mastery by these men of the period's ornate handwriting style. In contrast, we note that from the 1890's onward, with the greater influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe, Yiddish tended to supplant English as the written language of Jewish organizational records. As late as the 1920's, the minutes of the synagogues and Talmud Torah were written in Yiddish.

We are now prepared to look into the activities of the small, yet vigorous Jewish Community of Portland in the 1870's and see how the foundations were laid.

REFERENCE IN CHAPTER II

[1]**Centennial Celebration**, Portland City Council, 1886, p. 144.

CHAPTER III

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

The initial problems which faced the budding Jewish community in Portland were religious. It was necessary to make arrangements for religious services, supplies of kosher meat and a burial ground.

The first problem was solved temporarily by holding religious services in homes of interested persons. Barnard Aaronson and his father, Rev. Aaron Aaronson, took the lead. Later Shiah Berman and Jacob Judelsohn organized a makeshift congregation in their home. In the early 1880's these groups formed the nucleus of the first permanent congregations.

The problem of ritual slaughter was partially solved because Barnard and Aaron Aaronson were both qualified to act as *shochtim*. They were, however, only trained to handle fowl. For the slaughter of cattle it was necessary to bring an experienced *shochet* from Boston or New York. This was done for the first time in 1872.[1]

Acquisition of a burial ground was frequently discussed but not accomplished until the founding of the Portland Lodge 218, Independent Order B'nai B'rith.

Early in 1874 a petition was sent to the First District Grand Lodge, I.O.B.B., requesting permission for organization of a Portland lodge. The petition was signed by seven men who were to become the charter members. They were Barnard Aaronson, Morris Wolf (sometimes spelled Woolf), M. Herzberg, Robert Boas, Samuel C. Abrahams, Isaac Gossman and Joseph Levy.

On July 19, 1874 the lodge was installed by Grand Lodge representatives. In addition to the seven charter members, twenty-five petitions for membership were accepted and by special dispensation all members received their first, second and third degrees.[2] Barnard Aaronson was elected president by acclamation. Other officers included Morris Wolf, vice-president; William Schryver, recording secretary; and M. Herzberg, financial secretary.

Portland Lodge quickly concerned itself with the cemetery question and appointed a committee to seek a suitable location. To help finance the project, it was decided to hold a "festival" the next Purim. Tickets were printed, each to sell for one dollar,

for distribution among local members and also for sale to all other lodges. Proceeds, it was hoped, would cover the cost of a burial ground, which was expected to be approximately two hundred and twenty-five dollars.

After several delays, the special committee found a suitable site in Cape Elizabeth. In May 1875 Barnard Aaronson, Morris Stearns and Samuel C. Abrahams on behalf of the Lodge purchased a lot, sixty-five by one hundred feet, from John Woodbury, after securing permission from the Cape Elizabeth Board of Selectmen to use it for burial purposes. At a lodge meeting on May 23, 1875, the committee reported completion of its task. Portland had its first Jewish cemetery.

During its brief existence from 1874 to 1880, Portland Lodge functioned as the focal point of community activity. In the earlier years, the lodge sponsored High Holiday services and directed charitable and social service activities. Members were entitled to a sick benefit of five dollars a week for any illness which prevented them from pursuing their regular vocations. Members were also assessed from time to time to provide assistance for needy brethren.

In addition to uniting the local community, Portland Lodge was in constant contact with other lodges and, through it, Portland Jewry was bound up with the fortunes of American Jewry. The records of this period contain many references to appeals from other lodges for assistance to widows and others in distress. In nearly every such case Portland Lodge sent the fixed sum of sixteen cents for each of its members toward an endowment for a needy widow and family. This response from each lodge presented the recipient with a helpful fund.

In the conduct of its business, Portland Lodge was most efficient. The meetings were held with strict regard to protocol. Fines were imposed on members for being absent and for disturbing orderly procedure of meetings. At first, the fine for absenteeism was one dollar for officers and fifty cents for general members. The lesser fine was later adopted as the standard for all. Of course, it was not imposed if an acceptable excuse was offered. In one such case the minutes record somewhat quaintly: "Brother Outer Warden absent and on grounds of reasonable reason was excused."

That the ritual of the lodge was guarded very carefully is evident from the excitement that resulted from a reported leak. On January 21, 1876, the lodge appointed a committee "to investigate report that Ph. Silverstein revealed the secrets of the lodge to

his wife." No further mention is made of this matter and it can be assumed that the members were sufficiently impressed to exercise greater vigilance.

Whether the extensive fines served to stimulate a greater conscientiousness on the part of members cannot be determined. It is evident, however, that the freedom with which they were imposed proved very helpful to the treasury. In addition to the standard fines there were others. Jacob Judelsohn was fined fifty cents for leaving during a meeting, and on another occasion "the President fined ($1.00) Isaac Abrams for (unbecoming conduct) leaving the Lodge without saluting the chair." In spite of these unpleasant incidents meetings always ended with "Brotherly Love and Harmony," according to the standard formula used by all the recording secretaries.

An amusing incident which deserves to be quoted took place at a meeting on March 3, 1878. The minutes read:

> Bros. M. S. Fisher and B. Aaronson both claiming the floor. Bro. President recognized Bro. Aaronson and ordered Bro. Fisher to sit down and (he) refused to do so, and the P. fined the Bro. F. 25c and ordered the Bro. F. to sit down, and again (he) refused to do so, and the P. again fined the Bro. 50c and called the Bro. to order and Bro. Fisher said (") Bro. P. I appeal from your decision (") and the P. called the Bro. to Order and (he) still refused to do so, and he was fined $1.00 and still persisting not to obey Order so the Bro. President ordered the Bro. F. to leave the room and he has done so.

In spite of this unpleasantness, the secretary reported the meeting closed "in the usual form of Brotherly Love and Harmony."

Another incident, on the lighter side, is mentioned in the minutes of February 4, 1877. It seems that "Bro. Boas sent the sum of $8.42 for dues. Said Bro. supposes that he owes said sum to the Lodge but his wife advanced the sum unknown to the Bro. The lodge voted to send the money to the wife of Bro. Boas."

When the first burial ground was purchased in 1875, Portland Lodge organized a "Chevra Kaddisha" to supervise burial of members "according to ritual." This group consisted of seven members: Barnard Aaronson, Moses Fonsaca, Zorach Hirshon, S. Berman, Solomon Schryer, Samuel C. Abrahams and Morris Stearns. At the same time it fixed as fees for interment of non-

members and strangers not less than ten nor more than fifty dollars.

Membership in Portland Lodge was highly prized and the records contain applications from Jews in Saco, Lewiston and Bangor, as well as Portland. On one occasion several lodge officers traveled to Bangor to initiate candidates who were unable to come to Portland. In order to become a member the candidate had to apply through a standard "petition" and be sponsored by one or more lodge brothers. An investigating committee reported on the character and reputation of applicants. If the committee reported favorably, the applicant's name was placed before the entire membership and he was accepted only if no "blackball" was cast. On one occasion a favorable vote was reconsidered at a subsequent meeting and the candidate was rejected.

After the first few years the vitality of Portland Lodge was gradually sapped by economic pressure. There were frequent calls for more money as members became lax in payment of dues. Although details of this period are scanty, it is evident from the records that clashes between personalities became more pronounced and the idyllic unity suffered a mortal blow. Until the very end the lodge continued to initiate new members but meetings were held less frequently, due to the lack of a quorum.

Toward the end of 1880 the feeling became almost unanimous among members that the lodge had outlived its usefulness. It had acquired the burial ground and had helped in forming the religious community and a rudimentary social service agency. It had aparently reached the limit of its creative potential. The kernels it had nurtured were now ready to develop on their own. Thus, in November 1880, by unanimous vote, Portland Lodge decided upon dissolution and applied to a Boston lodge for admission in a body of those Portland members who wished to remain in the Independent Order B'nai B'rith. The final meeting was held on November 21, 1880, and the property and assets of the burial ground were transferred to a newly formed organization, the Portland Hebrew Benevolent Society.[3] With all other business wound up, "it was decided to dissolve the Lodge forever."

Portland's Jewish population in 1880 is difficult to determine. City directories of the period are incomplete, omitting many names of persons known from other sources to have been residents. A critical analysis of all sources results in the conclusion that there were thirty to forty Jewish families.

Occupationally, the Jewish community was engaged principally in peddling, the junk trade and the clothing business (including second-hand clothing and tailoring). Many Portland Jews were compelled to travel beyond the city limits in the course of peddling, living for a time elsewhere, then returning to Portland. Some of these peddlers recalled in later years their contact in smaller towns with isolated Jews, many of whom regarded themselves simply as "Germans."

In spite of the rapid strides toward Americanization, the Jews of Portland were still too new on the scene to participate in civic affairs. The Jews, as a whole, lost no time in applying for naturalization and from the earliest years were the object of appeals by politicians. Richard Hebert reports that during the political campaign of 1872

> Democrats even went so far as to adopt the dangerous expedient of resorting to personal attacks and to the risky business of trying to arouse Catholics and Jews against the Republicans on the grounds of religious and racial prejudice.[4]

When, in the late 1870's, Jews were becoming accustomed to having civil as well as religious marriages, Barnard Aaronson became a justice of the peace "for the double purpose of officiating in a civil capacity at marriages and settling, officially, disputes among his people."[5] He also functioned as a notary public and never accepted a fee from a Jew. Although he had a deep interest in public affairs, he declined to accept nomination for official positions.

Internally, the Jewish community in the late 1870's functioned as one large family with its characteristic solidarity ruffled by occasional friction. The joys and distresses of individuals became community affairs. Before Passover, for example, when a few Jews traveled to Boston to purchase provisions for the festival, they carried with them order lists from every family.

Religiously, a schism was in the making. Although Portland Jewry was loyal to Orthodox Judaism, there were two trends, one strictly traditional, the other somewhat "modern." In the late 1880's this breach was expressed in the creation of two separate congregations.

Until 1884 Portland had no full-time rabbi. The Rev. Aaron Aaronson, father of Barnard, spent only a few years in Portland with his son and then returned to Boston. In the late 1870's and in the 1880's he made occasional trips to Portland where he per-

formed rabbinical functions. These trips became unnecessary when Portland was able to support its own rabbi.

An important factor working toward solidarity in the early Portland Jewish community was the intimate relationship established between many of the older families by marriage. Thus, even in present-day Portland Jewry, one is struck by the elaborate interrelationship existing between descendants of the earlier families.

The period between 1880 and 1904, despite the many important changes and developments, must be treated as a whole. It was a period of expansion and diversification in all spheres of religious and social life, culminating once again, in a unified community.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER III

[1]**The Jewish Messenger**, of New York reported in its issue of June 7, 1872: "From the **Commercial** June 3, 1872. The first Jewish ceremony ever witnessed in Portland, Maine was performed lately. A priest of the faith came on from New York and went to the slaughter house, attired in his official robes, to kill an ox for the food of the faithful." Cited in **Publications** of the **American Jewish Historical Society**, Vol. 37, page 38, footnote.

[2]A complete list of the original members can be found in the appendix.

[3]The officers of the society were: Barnard Aaronson, president; Solomon Mathias, vice-president; Solomon Schryver, treasurer; Solomon Shine, financial secretary; Joseph H. Wolf, secretary. No records of this society have been found and it is difficult to determine how long it remained in existence. It may be identical to the Portland Hebrew Benevolent Burial Association which later purchased a burial ground in Portland, which it turned over to the Mount Sinai Cemetery Association in 1920. See Chapter IX.

[4]**Modern Maine**, Vol. 1, page 233.

[5]From biographical data furnished by the late Benjamin Wolf of Portland, son of Joseph H. Wolf and nephew of Barnard Aaronson.

CHAPTER IV

BRANCHING OUT (1880-1904)

In the early 1880's, Jewish immigration into the United States entered upon a period of ever-increasing growth. This was due principally to the rapidly worsening conditions of living for Jews in the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary.

In Russia, in 1881, a new wave of antisemitic violence was unleashed by government officials who encouraged peasants to fall upon the Jews without fear of punishment. Violence flared anew in 1882 and this pattern of wanton destruction became characteristic of Russian Jewish life in the ensuing decades in spite of world-wide protest meetings and diplomatic intervention. As a result, the Russian word "pogrom" (meaning pillage and devastation), the official designation for these mass attacks, became an international word.

In 1881 a total of 8,193 Jews were admitted at the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The number increased to 111,284 in 1891 and to 136,742 in 1892. The number admitted in Boston is unknown because statistics available for the years 1881 to 1890 refer only to admissions in those ports.[1] Many of the Jews who settled in Portland during this period came through Boston.

During the 1880's the Jewish population of Portland increased to sixty families or more.[2] Most of the newcomers were attracted by the presence of relatives or former townsmen. Thus there was little variation in geographical background, most of the population being made up of settlers from Russian Poland.

Many of the newcomers engaged in peddling, traveling from town to town on long excursions. Some settled temporarily in towns along their route. Some of the peddlers, after they accumulated a little capital, opened retail stores, dealing principally in dry goods and men's clothing. A few learned trades and became craftsmen. During this period, Barnard Aaronson, Joseph H. Wolf and Isaac Abrams acquired reputations for wealth in the young community. All were clothing merchants.

For the most part, Portland's entire Jewish population resided in an area of a few city streets centering around Hampshire Street.

To the contemporary Portlander, this was the "Jews' quarter." Nevertheless, many Jewish shopkeepers soon branched out and maintained their business establishments on more fashionable Middle Street and Congress Street. Others, maintaining clothing and general stores, became established on Fore Street.

Among other prominent Jewish merchants of the period were Wolf Bergman, a clothier on Middle Street; Joseph Levy, merchant tailor on Federal Street since 1860; David Shalit, a dry goods dealer on Middle Street; and the Shine brothers (Solomon and William) proprietors of a large general store in Monument Square. In addition a few Jewish establishments received brief notices in a contemporary business directory[3] from which we quote:

> Bernstein Bros. Clothing and Furnishings . . . No. 366 Fore St. also one at 399 Fore St. Portland, Me. . . The firm of Bernstein Bros. have carried on clothing business since 1888 . . . The individual members of the firm are J (oseph) S. and A (braham) J. Bernstein both of whom are natives of Russia, and well known throughout Portland and vicinity. (P. 119)
>
> Rosenberg Bros., Continental Clothing and Gents' Furnishings Goods House . . . 373 Fore Street. Founded 1889 . . . The premises comprise two floors. The firm consists of Mr. Simon Rosenberg who is a native of Germany, and Mr. Samuel Rosenberg, a native of Portland, Me. (P. 141)
>
> New York Clothing Store, Lewis Wassermann, No. 128 Middle Street and 459 Fore Street, Portland, Me. . . . . founded by Mr. Lewis Wasserman in 1888. He is a native of Russia. . . . (P. 115)
>
> Samuel Davis, Clothing, Furnishings and Jewelry, No. 330 Fore Street, Portland, Me. . . . He is a native of Russia and has been identified with his present establishment since 1890. (P. 87)

Reference to Jews in contemporary guide books, such as Hull's, and a conservative business directory indicate that the Portland Jewish colony, because of its growing population and gradual integration into the city's economic life, was being noticed by the general community. It was also during this period that the first native Jewish generation was growing up and exhibiting an interest in civic and political life. Among the young political aspirants was Samuel Rosenberg, who was born in Portland in 1873. He won a seat on the Common Council in 1898, and was thus the

first Jew to hold political office in Portland. The Common Council, the lower chamber, and the Board of Aldermen, the upper chamber, comprised the legislature of Portland. In later years, several Jews served in both the Common Council and the Board of Aldermen, as well as the State Legislature.

Although a few Jews managed to succeed financially by the turn of the century, the Jews as a group were not a significant element in Portland business life. Only gradually, thereafter, did they become established in important areas of economic life and exert an influence on the city's development.

Internally, the Jewish community was a network of religious, fraternal and charitable organizations which embraced the entire Jewish population. Three Orthodox congregations were in existence, each one striving for leadership. How they came into being will be treated in the following chapter.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER IV

[1]**To Dwell in Safety**, Mark Wischnitzer, 1949, p. 289.

[2]In his **Handbook of Portland**, 1888, John Hull writes: "The Jews in this city number more than 60 families."

[3]**Representative Businessmen of Portland**, George Bacon, 1891.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL LIFE

The Jewish community of Portland was founded as a religious settlement. The primary interest of the pioneers was to establish a community that would satisfy their need for worship, religious study and ritual observance. Even the so-called secular organizations had to satisfy certain religious wants. Thus we have seen that the principal aim and accomplishment of Portland Lodge I.O.B.B. was the purchase and supervision of a burial ground for Jews. When this need was fully satisfied, there was little left for Portland Lodge to do.

The earliest settlers and those who followed brought to Portland the tradition of East European Orthodox Judaism which took root here and flourished. With the exception of a brief period during the first World War, Orthodoxy prevailed as the only form of Jewish religious life until 1947. In that year Congregation Beth El was formed and affiliated with the conservative movement thus marking the end of the long period of Orthodox uniformity.

Until the advent of Congregation Beth El, Portland Jewry was probably unique in America for having withstood, for so long a time, the tendency toward differentiation that prevailed in nearly every community. Thus, from the earliest days, the Orthodox Jewish community of Portland was referred to as "the Jerusalem of America" by other Jewish comunities. And just as Jerusalem, even in romantic retrospect, was not free from intra-community differences, there was hardly a time when Portland was completely unified, even in its religious life.

Until the early 1880's, there was no synagogue. For purposes of prayer and religious study the worshipers met in the homes of several learned Jews. In time two distinct groups emerged, depending on their place of worship. One centered around Barnard Aaronson and the other around Jacob and Isaac Judelsohn. Although at the start the difference was only residential, it later became somewhat ideological. The congregation of Barnard Aaronson was aligned somewhat with "modernism," so the latter congregation regarded itself as truly "traditional." Then when

Barnard Aaronson and his brother-in-law, Joseph H. Wolf, formed their group officially as Congregation Sharith Israel, the Judelsohn group remained apart and later formed Congregation Beth Judah. Both congregations were formally organized in 1883.

Congregation Sharith Israel, in its earliest years, met at 261½ Middle Street over a store. Barnard Aaronson served as president of the congregation until 1889 and S. Rosenberg was the vice-president. For two years it managed its affairs without the services of a permanent rabbi. Then in 1885 it secured Rev. Israel Levine, a typical small town rabbi. In addition to performing regular rabbinical functions he also served as *shochet* and Hebrew teacher. On one occasion he had a seat of honor at an important civic function, the Centennial Celebration of the City of Portland.

On July 4, 1886 Portland celebrated its 100th anniversary under that name. The observance took the form of parades, feasting, merry-making and oratory, since the date coincided with Independence Day. Representing the Jews, Rev. Israel Levine, Barnard Aaronson and Joseph H. Wolf were seated on the dais before the City Hall, together with the other civic and religious dignitaries. Mr. Aaronson spoke for the Jewish community. We reproduce a portion of his address because of the light it casts on Jewish origins in Portland and the outlook of the earliest settlers:

> I beg to thank the committee on Sunday Services for extending an invitation to our church to participate in an historical discourse pertaining to the rise and progress of religion during the past century in the City of Portland. As president of the Hebrew Congregation, Sharith Israel, as a devout follower of the faith, and a citizen of our city for the past twenty years, I hope the observations I here note may be of some value in the records of the future and awaken some interest in the present amongst those who have not watched closely the movements of Judaism in their midst. A quarter of a century ago there was no representative of the Jewish Church in your city. In 1866 or 1867, several families pitched their tents here, and by frugal habits, honest efforts and application to their various vocations soon succeeded in becoming some of our most important citizens.
>
> The form of religion is Orthodox, and yet thoroughly in thought and action. As a class, the Portland "Sons of Israel" compare more than favorably with the Hebrews of other cities. . . Our synagogue at present, while not elaborate, is

impressive, and on Saturday morning our Sabbath service is conducted by a competent rabbi, and the Word of God is is uttered and re-echoed by willing and earnest mouths. . . We number some sixty families, and over the major portion being of the middle or poorer class, yet content with their lot, and always ready and willing to lend a helping hand to the old or infirm, the struggling or the unfortunate. May the next "centennial celebration" show as much marked progress as the present has over the past, and may our children be proud of the efforts of their fathers and say: "In the past we live".[1]

Congregation Beth Judah was located at 36 Deer Street in the building where Jacob Judelsohn resided. It was the smaller of the two congregations and until 1901 had no rabbi. Isaac Judelsohn often served as its *chazzan* (cantor) although it was not his official position.

In 1890 Sharith Israel brought to Portland Rabbi Hyman M. Lasker who served for five years. Rabbi Lasker was born in Lomzha, Poland, and educated at the yeshiva in Kovno where he received his rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Israel Elchanan Spector, one of the leading rabbis of Russia. Rabbi Lasker came to America in the late 1880's, having already acquired a reputation in Europe for scholarship. During his stay he organized Talmudic study groups in Sharith Israel, placing them on a firm foundation so that in yater years they produced their own leaders, among them Michael Rubinsky, Abraham J. Bernstein and Joseph Modes.

When Rabbi Lasker received a call from Buffalo, New York, he was replaced by Rabbi A. Sharshafsky, of whom little is now known except that he served from 1895 to 1897. In that year Nathan Druker was president of Sharith Israel. This fact is noted because, by strange coincidence, the new rabbi who arrived in that year was named Lazarus Druker. Rabbi Druker was not a properly ordained rabbi although he used the title. He was typical of many new arrivals from Europe who had studied in *yeshivot* and were skilled in ritual slaughtering, and as a result appropriated the title of "rabbi." His background, however, was satisfactory and he ably performed the requisite functions. of his office.

During the 1890's, Isaac Abrams, one of the early settlers, purchased a building on Fore Street for a new congregation, Beth Hamidrash Hagodol, but commonly referred to as "Abram's *shul*." It soon acquired a following as large as the other congregations

and even maintained a separate Hebrew School. When its members later united with those of Sharith Israel to form Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh, the Fore Street building was used for several years by a small Chassidic group.

By 1900 Portland Jewry could boast of a population of eighty families and three religious congregations. A hard core of early settlers was firmly entrenched and had achieved a favorable financial status. Already in 1890 Joseph H. Wolf had acquired the reputation of being a rich man and he demonstrated this by contributing handsomely to a fund for a new synagogue building for Sharith Israel. The new building was erected at rear 79 Middle Street and served as Portland's leading house of worship until Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue rose on Newbury Street in 1904.

Sharith Israel inaugurated the new century with a new president, Israel Davis, and a new rabbi, Solomon David Ha-Kohen Sprince. Like Rabbi Lasker, Rabbi Sprince had studied with leading rabbis of Russia and Poland. After serving in several Polish communities, he moved to Paris in 1889 to become rabbi of a Montmartre congregation. There he became a close friend of Zadoc Kahn, Grand Rabbi of France, and was closely associated with the new Zionist movement. Shortly after his arrival in America, he accepted the rabbinical post in Portland after hearing it described as the veritable "Jerusalem of America."

In 1901 Congregation Beth Judah acquired its first rabbi, Jacob Feinstein, and as a distinction, Rabbi Sprince was referred to as the Chief Rabbi of Portland. This title he bore for only a brief period, for in 1902 he left for a rabbinate in Montreal, Canada. His leaving coincided with a period of unrest, for many of the leaders were disturbed over the lack of unity in Portland's religious life. The multiplicity of congregations for a community so small was deemed a waste of energy and resources, and attempts were made to form a single large congregation. This aim was achieved in 1904 and marks the beginning af a new period in the history of Portland Jewry.

EARLY JEWISH EDUCATION

The education of the young has always been regarded among Jews as a primary obligation. This was underscored in the rabbinical literature as well as the tradition of the people. And in the Talmud we find the significance of education emphasized in proverbial sayings such as, "Jerusalem was destroyed because the instruction of the young was neglected." Furthermore, it is said: "The world is saved by the breath of school children. Even to

rebuild the Temple, the schools must not be closed." The early Jews of Portland were as responsive to this call as were Jews all over the world from time immemorial.

The first elementary Hebrew school, or *cheder*, was organized in 1884 at 34 Deer Street by Shiah Berman, its first president, Isaac Santosky, Jacob Judelsohn and Isaac Judelsohn. It started with six pupils and one teacher and was called the Portland Hebrew School. There is no lineal relationship between that school and the present school of the same name.

Jewish education also was offered in the small congregational schools of Beth Hamidrash Hagodol and Sharith Israel. Private teachers also gave lessons but the schools were able to establish an organized curriculum which led the students beyond the field of elementary reading and writing skills into the study of the Bible and the Talmud. The students attended classes all year, starting at age five or six and continuing often into their late teens. Bar Mitzvah, at age thirteen, was not the terminal point, but rather the start of a period of more intensive learning. This approach to Jewish education was possible only in a community where Jewish values were held in high esteem.

Although Portland was regarded as a "Jerusalem", not all the Jews were completely observant. There were some who violated the Sabbath or who were not punctilious in other obsrvances, but they were the exception. They violated the mores of the community but felt uncomfortable in the prevailing religious climate when activities became public knowledge. Even as late as the 1930's the religious climate of Portland, the objective censor, was determined by Orthodoxy. And, in spite of a gradually increasing defection in the ranks, Portland regarded itself for all practical purposes as an Orthodox community.

REFERENCE IN CHAPTER V

[1]**Centennial Celebration,** Portland City Council, 1886, pp. 144-145.

CHAPTER VI

SHAAREY TPHILOH AND BEYOND

The steady increase in the Jewish population, beginning in the 1880's, became even more marked after the turn of the century. By 1907 there were about fifteen hundred Jews in Portland compared with seven hundred for Bangor and two hundred and fifty for Lewiston-Auburn. In 1912 there were at least two thousand Jews in Portland. The small synagogues of the existing congregations were inadequate to accommodate the growing community. This situation, combined with a mounting desire for congregational unity, gave impetus to a movement for a large community synagogue. In 1904 construction of the new synagogue was under way.

Those who lived through that period still recall the enthusiasm, devotion and selflessness which pervaded the entire community. Men and boys carried bricks by hand or by cart. Individuals contributed their skills. The entire community mobilized to raise money or to assist in the actual building of the house of worship. It was truly an enterprise wrought with the sweat, tears and funds of Portland Jewry. In this manner the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue (Gates of Prayer) was erected on Newbury Street. By the fall of 1904, although the structure was not yet completed, its gates were opened to an initial membership of approximately one hundred families.

Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh was in effect a merger of the two larger Orthodox congregations and thus embraced most of the Jews of Portland. Congregation Beth Judah continued to exist separately for several years, but played only a minor role in the development of Portland Jewry.

In September 1904, Philip Silverman presented the key that opened the doors of Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue to inaugurate the High Holiday season and a new chapter in the religious life of Portland Jewry. On November 13, 1904, a constitution and by-laws for the new congregation were adopted unanimously by its directors. Bernard L. Shalit was elected president; Benjamin Snider, vice-president; Samuel Rosenberg, treasurer; and Nathan Stein, secretary.[2] Although the constitution provided that "pro-

cedings at meetings shall be in both the English and Jargon language," the favored medium was Yiddish, the "Jargon Language."[3]

The early history of Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh is intimately connected with the name of Rabbi Chaim Shohet, a distinguished Talmudic scholar who served Portland Jewry until his death in 1921. His reputation for learning in Europe and America enhanced not only his own prestige but that of the community he served. Under his guidance Shaarey Tphiloh emerged not only as an impressive house of worship but as a genuine Jewish house of study. Among the leaders of the Talmudic study groups through the years were Abraham J. Bernstein, Michael Rubinsky and Joseph Modes. Abraham J. Bernstein was principally associated with the Chevra Mishnayot, the Mishna study group, and Michael Rubinsky with the Chevra Shas for the study of the Gemara. Joseph Modes also served for many years as a teacher in the Portland Hebrew School.[4]

As the principal religious group in the Portland Jewish community, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh also played a leading role in supervising ritual requirements. The supply of kosher meat was the responsibility of its Vaad Ha-Schechita which was incorporated on January 6, 1906 in order to carry out the "enforcement of the rules and laws of the Jewish religion in regard to the preparation of meat used for food by the Jewish people of said Portland." At that time Jacob Rosenberg was president; Samuel Davis, treasurer; and Moses Brown, secretary.[5]

The Vaad Ha-Schechita had been organized several years before the founding of Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh and was well organized by the time it came under its new jurisdiction. Its first recorded meeting was held in October 1901, in a Hebrew school on Chatham Street, with Isaac Santosky presiding.

The minutes of its first meeting reveal the problems confronting the Vaad, dealing often with relations between the butchers and the *shochtim* (slaughterers). We read that "the butcher, Max Levy, complained that he could not pay $5.75 weekly for the *shochtim*. In the first place it didn't pay him to do so. Secondly, the other butcher slaughtered more meat and did not pay enough." Furthermore, "Max Levy complained that it is too difficult to get hold of the *shochtim* when he needs them." On the other hand, "the *shochtim* complained that they are working too hard and want more money."

The Vaad was responsible for hiring *shochtim*, certification of butchers and regulation of kosher meat prices. All such problems

had to be handled delicately. On November 16, 1903, the Vaad Ha-Sechita held a meeting concerned with important organizational matters affecting its three chief functions. We reproduce below an excerpt from the minutes of that meeting, for it presents a concrete picture of the period's community organization and standard of living.

> Michael E. Rubinsky made a motion, seconded by Louis H. Rose, that a *mashgiach* be appointed to supervise Kashruth. The chairman brought it to a vote and it was voted to elect a *mashgiach* at a salary of five dollars a week. Mr. Rubinsky recommended as *mashgiach* Moshe Isaac Kaslovsky. Philip Silverman recommended Judah Leib Schneider. Samuel Davis recommended that a secret ballot be cast. Kaslovsky was elected by a majority of two votes. After long debate it was unanimously voted that no more than three butchers be allowed in Portland. It was also voted by a large majority that the butchers deposit fifty dollars as security and sign an agreement that they will abide by all the rules and regulations of the Vaad and in the event they breach the contract, the deposit be forfeited to the treasury of the Vaad. It was also voted that the price of meat be no more or less than 12c per pound, prices to hold till the first day of June, 1904. Two applications for butchers were received, namely from Joseph Kriger, and Pilot and from Judah Leib Schneider. After long debate, it was voted to hold a secret ballot. Kriger and Pilot were elected by a majority of nine.

In subsequent meetings the Vaad spelled out in greater detail regulations governing business hours of butcher shops and the handling of meat and fowl to conform to laws of ritual slaughtering. The prevailing religious climate endowed the Vaad with a measure of authority which enabled it to exercise a powerful influence in Jewish comunity life.

As the leading Jewish religious instituion, Shaarey Tphiloh also had responsibility for proper ritual burial. Traditionally, the function has been carried out in Jewish communities by a burial society called Chevra Kadisha, associated with the synagogue.

A previous chapter has indicated how Portland Lodge, B'nai B'rith acquired the first burial ground and organized its own Chevra Kadisha. After the lodge dissolved, this society presumably carried on with its task, at least for former lodge members. In

1889 another burial society was organized, and it is referred to today as the "old Chevra Kadisha." Isaac Santosky served as its president for many years. Records of this organization unfortunately are not at hand to detail how the Jewish community directed performance of ritual burial between 1889 and 1917.

In 1917 the present Chevra Kadisha came into existence, it seems, in answer to a need not attended to by the older society. The latter evidently served only Sabbath observers. With the passing of time, as more members of the community became ineligible for its services through non-observance of the Sabbath, a hardship was imposed upon many families. The new society performed its services for all Jews, regardless of the degree of their piety.

The earliest remembered Jewish undertakers were Shiah Berman, Zissel Boxstein and Bennett Goffin. Following Bennett Goffin's death in 1938, Hyman Boxstein succeeded to the post, assisted by Joseph Berenson.

Although founded in the summer of 1917, the present Chevra Kadisha was not incorporated under the laws of the State of Maine until May 14, 1941.[6] The organization's purpose, as noted in a Hebrew preface to its records, was "to do the holy work of burial and whatever is necessary for the dead." Its first ordinance established that "the Chevra Kadisha shall be under the jurisdiction of the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue." Strict regulations were laid down governing admission of members to the society and proper performance of duties. Once a year, during December, it is the custom for all members of the society to recite penitential prayers in the synagogue and to fast. They then go to the burial ground where they read the afternon prayer service and selected verses from the Torah.

In 1942 the Chevra Kadisha purchased its funeral home at 15 Locust Street with the assistance of Samuel Seiger and Hyman Boxstein. Aaron Davidson supervises the building's maintenance and repairs.

Shortly after the rise of Shaarey Tphiloh, a special effort was made to develop a central comunity Hebrew school. Heretofore, elementary Jewish education was imparted in small congregational schools or by private tutors, some of them itinerant teachers. This uneven situation was felt to be unsatisfactory and, after much communal discussion, the present Portland Hebrew School was organized.

On May 7, 1908, sixteen communal leaders applied for the incorporation of the Portland Hebrew School "as an educational, charitable and religious association."[8] The purposes of the school

were outlined as follows:

1. To teach and enlighten its members, their children and others concerning the Hebrew language, the history of its people and educate them generally.

2. To assist and befriend people of Hebrew extraction and be of service to them along charitable lines.

3. To promulgate the doctrines of the Hebrew religion.

4. To do any and all acts and things to promote education, charity and religion.

On May 26, 1908, the signers of the charter met at Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue and elected the first officers and directors of the Portland Hebrew School. Joseph S. Bernstein was elected president; Max Robinson, vice-president; Michael Rubinsky, treasurer; and Isaac Weisberg, secretary.[9] Among the early teachers were Isaac Weisberg and Harris L. Selig. Mr. Selig also served as the school's first principal.

For ten years, the Portland Hebrew School was opposite the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue on Newbury Street. Its building on Pearl Street was acquired in 1919 at a cost of $11,500. The building, which had belonged to Hyman Finkelman, had been the subject of prolonged negotiations. Finally, a mid-summer midnight visit to the home of Mr. Finkelman was made by a committee consisting of Abraham S. Levey, Samuel Seiger and Hyman Bernstein. Mr. Finkelman, roused from his sleep, was informed that the committee wished to close the deal for the building and would deposit one hundred dollars. The one hundred dollar deposit was borrowed from Mr. Bernstein for, as Mr. Levey recalled, he was the only one present who carried that much money. Later, a cash payment of $4,000, derived from proceeds of the Jewish Welfare Board campaign of 1918, secured the purchase. The Portland Hebrew School then launched a campaign for $12,000, for the remainder of the principal and needed repairs. In a whirlwind drive, sparked by a mass meeting led by Jacob H. Berman, a total of $20,000 was raised.

After a thorough remodeling the building was ready for occupancy the following year. The inauguration of the school was celebrated with impressive ceremonies, culminating in an elaborate parade from the old building to the new premises. This structure, comprising eight classrooms and a large auditorium, was indispensable for the steadily increasing number of students. The peak attendance was reached in 1928, with two hundred sixty-five students taught by a faculty of five teachers and a principal.[10]

When the Portland Hebrew School was still on Newbury Street, a women's auxiliary was formed, but there are no written records of the organization before 1919. At that time several women were serving on the school's board of directors. These included Sarah (Mrs. A. J.) Bernstein, Molly (Mrs. Jacob) Press, Theresa (Mrs. Joseph S.) Bernstein, Esther Shilling and Leah (Mrs. Philip) Silverman. The auxiliary's principal efforts were directed toward paying off the school's mortgage. This was accomplished in 1928. At that time, Mrs. Abraham J. Bernstein was president; Mrs. Lazarus Abrahamson, vice-president; Mrs. Philip Abrahamson, treasurer; and Mrs. Joseph S. Bernstein, secretary.[11]

Shortly before the acquisition of the new Portland Hebrew School building, another synagogue was erected – the Beth Ha-Knesseth Anshe Sfaard, a Chassidic congregation. For at least a decade before the erection of this synagogue, a small number of Chassidim had settled in Portland. Desiring a place to worship in accordance with their Sephardic ritual, they first acquired the premises on Fore Street that formerly served as "Abrams' *shul.*" After a few years they used facilities of the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue, where they gathered in a separate *minyan.*

About 1912 the Chassidim began to formulate plans for their own synagogue which was completed in 1916, due chiefly to efforts of Abraham Seigal, Abraham Isenman and David Finkelman. The sisterhood of the new synagogue was founded in 1916 by Mrs. Bernard Cope, who also served as its first president.

The year marking erection of the Anshe Sfaard Synagogue also witnessed the birth of another religious movement known as the Modern Synagogue Society. This was the first effort to establish a liberal congregation in Portland. The society turned for assistance to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the rabbinical school of the conservative movement. Among the society's early protagonists were Dr. Elias Caplan, Dr. John L. Davis, Jacob Rosenberg and David Beckelman.

Services of the Modern Synagogue Society, which were held in the Y.M.H.A. hall, departed from Orthodoxy in several respects. The number of prayers were reduced, many were in English, and separation of the sexes during worship was abandoned. In 1918, Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan came from New York City to assist in giving ideological direction. Shortly thereafter, the congregation adopted the name Temple Israel and acquired the services of a permanent rabbi.

In 1919, with Jacob Rosenberg as president and David Beckelman as secretary of Temple Israel, Rabbi Rudolph Lupo was

called as leader. Having just been ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Lupo was faced with difficulties in his first post almost from the start. Members were divided among themselves on basic ideological questions. Some even desired a more radical break with Orthodoxy in favor of the Reform movement. Rabbi Lupo was faced with the difficult task of reconciling divergent views on basic questions of congregational policy and the future orientation of the congregation.

A complicating factor that reacted unfavorably against Temple Israel was the staunch opposition on the part of the Orthodox forces who comprised the overwhelming majority of Portland Jewry. Rabbi David Essrig, who came to Shaarey Tphiloh in 1919, did not wish to associate with Rabbi Lupo in any community gathering and refused to speak with him. The bitterness felt on both sides often led to embarrassing situations. On one occasion, when a public meeting was planned in connection with the purchase of the new building for the Portland Hebrew School, Rabbi Essrig issued an ultimatum that he would not attend if Rabbi Lupo was invited. The feud of the rabbis added more heat to already raging fires.

The internal dissensions in Temple Israel proved too great a hurdle for Rabbi Lupo. Pressures resulted in a shortening of tempers and on several occasions there were bitter recriminations between rabbi and congregation. As a result of this increasing friction, Rabbi Lupo left Portland and shortly thereafter Temple Israel was dissolved.

The year 1919 was a critical one for Portland Jewry, for it witnessed not only the demise of Temple Israel but also a schism in Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh. The latter resulted from several disputes involving personalities, in which Rabbi Chaim Shohet was alleged by some to have been insulted and shabbily treated by others. The upshot of these disputes was the secession of part of the congregation and creation of a new congregation with Rabbi Shohet as spiritual leader. This inaugurated a new period in Portland's religious life, which will be discussed in Chapter IX.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER VI

[1]Population figures from **American Jewish Year Book**, Vol. 16, p. 365

[2]Succeeding presidents were Isaac Santosky, Jacob Rodman, Joseph Mack, Julius Comeras, Morris H. Sacknoff, Hyman Bernstein, Abraham A. Greenberg, Phineas Grunes, Philip Abrahamson, I. Edward Cohen and Irving Rothstein.

[3]The first board of directors consisted of Bernard Berenson, Abraham J. Bernstein, Samuel Bernstein, Elias Caplan, Israel Davis, Samuel Davis, Joseph Mack, Harris Matson, Louis Matson, Julius Press, Joseph Resnikowitz, Abraham Robinson, Max Robinson, Jacob Rosenberg, Samuel Rosenberg, Michael Rubinsky, Morris Sacknoff, Isaac Santosky, Bernard L. Shalit, David Shwartz, Nathan Silverman, Philip Silverman, Benjamin Snider, Nathan Stein and Louis Weinstein.

[4]Michael Rubinsky first undertook leadership of the Chevra Shas in 1908, as a memorial to his then recently deceased father. This entailed conducting the daily study of the Talmud. When about twelve years later Congregation Etz Chaim was formed, Mr. Rubinsky continued his leadership of the Chevra in that synagogue. Joseph Modes then assumed direction of the Chevra in Shaarey Tphiloh.

[5]Its charter directors were Shiah Berman, Abraham J. Bernstein, Joseph S. Bernstein, Moses Brown, Samuel Davis, Bernard Goffin, Marcus Goldblatt, Joseph Mack, Jacob Rosenberg, Philip Silverman, Pesach Tabachnick, Joseph H. Wolf and Louis Zaltzman.

[6]The articles of incorporation list the following officers: Morris Crasnick, president; Morris Matluck, vice-president; Rev. Harry Simansky, secretary; Hyman Boxstein, treasurer. The directors were Rabbi Mendel Lewittes, Philip Abrahamson, Joseph Berenson, Abraham A. Greenberg, Gimpel Lerman, Harry Levy, Joseph Mack, William Goodman, Jacob Rodman, Morris Sacknoff and Samuel Seiger.

[7]In addition to Morris Crasnick the following have served as presidents of the society: Julius Comeras, Herzl Levi, Morris Matluck and Hyman Boxstein.

[8]The applicants were Joseph S. Bernstein, Marks Bernstein, Morris Crasnick, David Davidson, Joseph Mack, Abraham Robinson, D. Robinson, Max Robinson, Jacob Rosenberg, Michael Rubinsky, Morris Sacknoff, Harris L. Selig, Philip Shilling, D. Silverman, Isaac Weisberg and Peter Weiss.

[9]Succeeding presidents of the Portland Hebrew School were Abraham Herman, Abraham Seigal, Abraham A. Greenberg, Dr. John Davis, Samuel Sacknoff, Oscar Tabachnick, Dr. Solomon Golodetz, Charles Cohen, Saul H. Sheriff, Julius Greenstein and Dr. Daniel Kornetsky.

The first board of directors consisted of Joseph S. Bernstein, Max Bernstein, David Davidson, Bernard Goffin, Abraham Isenman, Morris Kravitz, Joseph Mack, Eli Perry, D. Robinson, Max Robinson, Michael Rubinsky, Michael Sacknoff, Philip Shilling, Philip Silverman and Isaac Weisberg.

[10]The officers of the Portland Hebrew School in 1919, when the new building was acquired, were Abbe Herman, president; Abraham A. Greenberg, vice-president; Robert Epstein, financial secretary; and Nathan Sapoll, treasurer. The key to the school was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Abbe Herman.

The Building Committee included Abraham Seigal, chairman; Max Oransky, Abraham S. Levey and Frank Feldman, treasurer.

[11]Succeeding presidents of the Portland Hebrew School Auxiliary included Mrs. Benjamin Gordon, Mrs. Milton Burke, Mrs. Ralph Ross, Mrs. Abraham Simonds, Mrs. Louis Gordon, Mrs. Benjamin Glick and Mrs. Carl Miller.

CHAPTER VII

PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL LIFE

In this chapter we will discuss the rise and development of charitable, fraternal and Zionist groups in Portland from the beginning of the present century. In order to present a picture of continuity, it will be necessary to sketch briefly their development until the present day. Here, however, we will concern ourselves with groups that came into existence before the end of the first World War and leave for another chapter those organizations that arose afterwards.

Wherever Jews settled and formed communities, one of their prime concerns was to provide for needy brethren. Indeed, this concern with philanthropy was not looked upon as a special and separate undertaking but as an extension of the religious spirit. Thus we find that in most Jewish communities philanthropy, or what we now call social work, nearly always started as a function of the synagogue.

In the earliest years of the Portland Jewish community, before the rise of synagogues, philanthropy was somewhat unorganized. Under those circumstances the dispensing of charity was a semi-private affair. When one person learned of another's distress he would personally undertake a fund raising campaign among other Jewish families. It has been noted how Portland Lodge of B'nai B'rith responded to calls for assistance of needy members from lodges all over the country. This readiness to respond was also evident in the local community. A regular committee of the lodge investigated all reports of misfortune and recommended assistance wherever it was needed.

The oldest distinctly philanthropic organization among Portland Jews was the Gemileth Chasodim Shel Emes (Hebrew Free Loan Association), created chiefly through the efforts of Isaac Santosky. The date of its founding is unknown, but it was already in existence during the early 1890's.[1] Mr. Santosky served as its president for many years, during which time the organization assisted countless Jews in their struggle for a livelihood by granting them interest-free loans.

The early 1900's witnessed a rapid growth in Portland's Jewish

population. The virulent antisemitism in Eastern Europe and the outbreak of violence against Jews in Russia, especially the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, resulted in a mass emigration of Jews from that area. Some found their way to Portland. The flow of migration from Europe to America continued steadily until 1914, when the outbreak of war in Europe brought it to a temporary halt.

The immigrants brought with them not only their meager possessions and their religion but also their passion for social justice and education. It was during this period that several literary and fraternal groups were created. However, at the start, economic difficulties loomed large for the newcomers and the Jewish community had to expand its philanthropic activity.

In 1906 a United Hebrew Charities was organized to direct the overall philanthropic program. The old Gemileth Chasodim was merged with it, but maintained itself as an independent agency principally concerned with free loan service. In addition, the United Hebrew Charities provided direct assistance in money and goods to the needy.[2]

Among the early pioneers of Jewish social work in Portland were men whose names are all but unknown to the present Jewish community — Baranowich, Yarchowsky, Margowsky, Pepper, Klein and Druker. Nathan Druker had served as president of Congregation Sharith Israel from 1897 to 1899 and was one of the most prominent community leaders. It was due in great measure to efforts of Nathan Druker and Isaac Santosky that the United Hebrew Charities came into existence. But the success of the United Hebrew Charities was due ultimately to the energetic efforts of its workers.[3] In this connection, prominent mention must be given to Benjamin Fireman who arrived in Portland in 1902 and was active in charities work from the start. In a brief memoir of his activity, Mr. Fireman recalled how he

> together with Myer Karlin, Sprintze (Mrs. Abraham J.) Bernstein, Fannie (Ginsburg) Kaplan and several others. . . climbed three flights of stairs (because top floor apartments were less expensive and the poor could not afford better quarters) to deliver bags of flour, as well as other food stuffs. On many occasions these deliveries were made at late hours of the night so that their presence would not be known by the recipients, whose pride would not permit them to make application for assistance. Nor were the children of our needy families put to shame by the destitution of their

parents.

> For more than thirty-five years, both Sprintze Bernstein and Myer Karlin were the backbone of the organization. No heartbreaking problem was too personal to be unfolded to either. The needy of our community had the utmost confidence in these two sterling souls, and this confidence was never betrayed. Nor was any problem too difficult to be undertaken by "Sprintze" or "Myer", as they were fondly called. The hour never was too late, nor was the weather ever too cold for either of them to go out on a personal visit whenever assistance was needed. The honor and dignity of the United Hebrew Charities was the honor and dignity that was given to the organization by their association with the Charities.[4]

Hardly any early records of the United Hebrew Charities have been preserved. Of official documents, only its certificate of incorporation, dated June 15, 1915, remains. The aims of the organization, as stated in that document, were "to gratuitously aid and help the poor and the suffering with money, food, clothing and fuel, and to do anything and everything that relates to almsgiving and charity."[5] These worthy aims were carried out through the efforts of its devoted workers, some of whom have been mentioned, and many of whom worked anonymously.

Another responsibility undertaken by the United Hebrew Charities almost from its inception was service for transients. This included food, lodging, travel fare, clothing, and other necessities.

The Ladies' Society *Hachnoses Orchim* (Travelers' Aid) came into existence in 1907 as an affiliate of the United Hebrew Charities, and from that time the Portland Jewish community was never without a transient shelter. There the traveler, the homeless, the itinerant rabbi or the *meshulach* could be assured of kosher meals and facilities in conformity with Jewish tradition.[6] The names of Mrs. Jacob Whitney and Mrs. Heifetz, who maintained such shelters for many years, figure prominently in the agency's records. During the past fifteen years Mrs. Etta Dansky has provided food, lodging and care to transients in her home at 61 India Street.

It would be impossible to record the names of all the pious Jews who offered their homes to transient *orchim*, literally "guests." The satisfaction they derived from the performance of such religious duties was so great that the *orchim* were sought out and escorted to their homes. However, among the most zealous hosts were Abraham J. Bernstein, Aaron Davidson, David (Velvel)

Davidson and Michael Rubinsky. Others who solicitously cared for the *orchim* were Abraham H. Ginsburg and Gimpel Lerman.

The field of charitable work was not monopolized by the United Hebrew Charities. Other organizations, principally women's groups, initiated charitable projects. Of several such early groups little is now remembered aside from their names. One was the Jewish Ladies Aid Society, organized in 1909 with Mrs. George Wolf as secretary. Another was the Y.W.H.A., which will be considered in another context.

The paucity of Jewish records for the early years of this century holds true for men's organizations as well. We know that in the late 1890's there was organized a Portland City Lodge, No. 271, Order of Brith Abraham. Benjamin Markson served as secretary during its early years and was succeeded by M. Stein. Disagreement among members caused a split in 1903. The dissidents were then accepted into the Independent Order Brith Abraham and on April 16, 1903 they formed a Portland chapter called the Star of Maine Lodge, No. 329. Neither of these lodges flourished, although the latter managed to sustain itself until 1939.

The increased immigration from Eastern Europe brought more Jews to Portland and new ideas and interests as well. As a result the number of educational and fraternal organizations increased. In 1906 or 1907 a Hebrew Independent and Literary Club was formed, with Jacob Kronberg as president and Harry Finks as secretary. In the same period there existed a Young Men's Hebrew Social Club, which may have been a forerunner of the Y.M.H.A. The *American Jewish Year Book* for 1913-1914 lists a Hebrew Charity Association in Portland with Hyman Abrahamson as secretary, but this may have been a variant name for the United Hebrew Charities. An Old Men's Jewish Home and Orphan Asylum at 294 Spring Street is mentioned in the *American Jewish Year Book* for 1914-1915. During the same period there existed an O.K. Club and a few years later we find mention of a Pine Tree Association of Portland, with Morris Mencher as president and Harry Weisman as secretary. Unfortunately we are left with no clues as to the development of these diverse groups and can only assume that they occupied the stage of Jewish life only briefly.

Other fraternal and ideological organizations of the period had a more lasting influence on community development. Among these were the Workmen's Circle, the Y.M.H.A., the Y.W.H.A., B'nai B'rith and various Zionist organizations.

The Workmen's Circle, a Yiddish-speaking fraternal order, was

organized in 1907 by Saul Shulman.[7] After two years of affiliation with the Independent Workmen's Circle of Massachusetts, it obtained a charter from the national Workmen's Circle. From a charter membership of eighteen it grew to one hundred and fifty and rented quarters at 15 Vine Street. There the Circle established a library, conducted Americanization classes for immigrants and sponsored lecture courses for members.[8]

The Young Men's Hebrew Association was founded in 1906 in a furniture store at 65 Middle Street. The circumstances of its founding were described many years later in the following manner:

> About the round table gathered our knights of history. Unlike those of King Arthur's day, they stood - - for the round table was not intended for a center of assembly, however commendable its purposes might be. Harry Taylor had that round oaken table in his furniture store from which he displayed his wares. Still that did not prevent the boys from congregating there and discussing the feasibility of the organization of the Jewish youth of Portland.[9]

Dr. John L. Davis was president of the new organization, Harry Cain was secretary, and Samuel Sacknoff treasurer. After three or four informal meetings, the association procured rooms in the Boyd Building at the corner of Exchange and Middle Streets. Several years later it acquired quarters in a building at the corner of Congress and Temple Streets.

The Y.M.H.A. was incorporated in 1909 and began to expand the scope of its activities.[10] In 1913 it proceeded to purchase a permanent home at the corner of Locust Street and Cumberland Avenue, but due to lack of funds the building was given up. The organization then rented quarters at Temple and Federal Streets, where it enjoyed its greatest success. In 1916 the Y.M.H.A. began publishing a monthly journal, *The Y.M.H.A. Leader,* under the editorship of Israel Bernstein. Only one issue of this short-lived publication is now extant and gives us but a brief insight into the activities of the organization.

The Y.M.H.A. was organized as a social and cultural club, offering not only fraternal but educational activities.

To achieve the latter ends, a library of Jewish books was set up including such standard works as the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and Graetz's *History of the Jews.* A lecture and forum program was sponsored. It was also during this period that the previously mentioned Modern Synagogue Society was organized, and the

meeting hall of the Y.M.H.A. was used for its gatherings.

When the United States entered World War I, the Y.M.H.A. organized a military company of sixty young men, under the leadership of Sergeant Henry N. Ebert of Fort McKinley. It bought $3,600 worth of Liberty Bonds and contributed generously to the Red Cross Fund. Over one third of its members joined the National Guard and other military bodies, and as a result, membership of the Y.M.H.A. fell sharply and its quarters were abandoned.[11]

Not until the early 1920's was the Y.M.H.A. able to regain its former stature. Once more it led a drive for the purchase of a permanent home. The drive was a success and in January 1924, the building at 22 Wilmot was opened as a community center. The Y.M.H.A. grew under the leadership of William Perlin, James H. Davidson and Louis Bernstein. In 1937 it had two hundred and fifty members. However, after the new Jewish Community Center was opened in the fall of 1938, it gradually absorbed the activities of the Y.M.H.A., thus bringing its history to a close.

Side by side with the men's organization, a Young Women's Hebrew Association also flourished. This organization was founded in the year 1907, but there are no source materials prior to 1911. The minute books begin with a meeting held on December 6, 1911, when the following officers were elected: Mrs. Louis Matson, president; Miss Ada Erlick, vice-president; Miss Fannie Rodman, financial secretary; Miss Etta Sivovlos, recording secretary; and Miss May Rosenberg, treasurer.[12]

Among the earliest projects of the Y.W.H.A. was a home for destitute Jewish children, for which a campaign was launched in 1912. This project failed and members then directed their attention toward establishment of a home for the Jewish aged in Portland. In addition, the Y.W.H.A. cooperated with the United Hebrew Charities by investigating reports of Jews in need, and often assisted needy persons directly.

Mrs. Samuel Seiger became the second president of the Y.W.H.A. and was succeeded by Mrs. Eli Perry. During the war years the organization suffered a decline, but was reorganized after the war through the efforts of Miss Ida Goffin.[13] It then aimed at providing supervised group activity for young people.

With the purchase of the Wilmot Street Community Center in 1924, the Y.W.H.A. expanded its program. It organized groups of juniors and intermediates, offering girls from six to sixteen their first opportunity for organized activity and cultural work. In addition, the Y.W.H.A. founded a Sunday School. When the new Jewish Community Center was established in 1938, the Y.W.

H.A. went out of existence and was replaced by the Center Women's Club.

Since 1880, when the first Portland Lodge, B'nai B'rith went out of existence, no effort was made to revive it until 1916. By that time only a few of the original members were living and the new lodge was launched by men to whom the old lodge was semi-legendary.

On July 20, 1916, Israel Lodge, No. 796, Independent Order B'nai B'rith, was organized in Portland by sixteen charter members.[14] Dr. Elias Caplan served as the first president and also as the first state deputy.[15] For many years the lodge was very active, giving moral and economic support to civic and religious enterprises. It's "degree team" traveled throughout New England organizing branch lodges. As a result of factional strife in its later years, this lodge went out of existence on October 25, 1930.

A ladies' auxiliary of B'nai B'rith also was formed, and was known as Israel Chapter, No. 58. Its fate paralleled that of the men's group.[16]

Side by side with these philanthropic, fraternal and social groups, Portland Jewry developed several Zionist organizations, beginning early in the present century. That was the period of greatest growth of the Zionist movement in Europe and it was only natural that the new immigrants would bring these interests with them to their new homes.

The oldest Zionist group in Portland was the Degel Zion Camp, affiliated with B'nai Zion and organized in 1908. Among its most prominent members were Dr. Elias Caplan, Harris L. Selig, Mark Levine, Frank Feldman, Mendell J. Silverman, Robert Epstein, Jacob E. Rubinsky, Max W. Simonds and Joseph Wigon. The club sponsored a program of educational, political and fund raising in behalf of Palestine. With the organization and growth of other Zionist groups in Portland and the development of comprehensive fund raising campaigns on a national level, the Degel Zion Camp declined in membership and importance. After the death in 1935 of one of its leaders, Frank Feldman, the group changed its name to Degel Ephraim, in his memory. At present it is inactive.

The Poale Zion, or Labor Zionist group, was first organized early in 1915 as the Portland Hebrew Literary Club, consisting of Ida Levitan, Sonia Astor, Edith Kaplan, Samuel Cronsberg, Samuel Romanoff and Samuel Nelson. Its purpose was to provide a forum for discussion of Jewish literature, social welfare and Zionist ideology. The meetings were held at Robinson's Hall on Middle

Street and the club's membership soon increased to sixty.

On November 2, 1917, Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary informed Lord Rothschild that the British government viewed "with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object." This pro-Zionist declaration was received with great rejoicing by Jews all over the world. But the war was still on and Palestine was in Turkish hands.

Plans for the formation of a Jewish Legion were given renewed impetus. American volunteers traveling through Portland to join the Jewish Legion in Canada were extended hospitality by the Portland Hebrew Literary Club. Among those who passed through Portland were David Ben-Gurion, later to become first Prime Minister of Israel, and Isaac Ben-Zvi, now president of Israel.[17]

In 1919 the Portland Hebrew Literary Club affiliated itself with the Labor Zionist Organization of America and formed the first branch of Poale Zion in Portland. Samuel Nelson was installed as president. The branch flourished until the depression of the 1930's when its activities were curtailed. In 1935 it was reactivated and Nathan Astor was installed as president.[18]

The Portland Hadassah, a women's Zionist group, was organized in 1915, in the presence of Henrietta Szold who founded the national organization in 1912. Miss Szold came as the guest of Mrs. Elias Caplan who invited Mrs. Joseph S. Bernstein and Mrs. Benjamin Press to participate in a discussion on the feasibility of organizing a local chapter. At that meeting the local chapter of Hadassah was born and Mrs. Elias Caplan became its first president.[19]

The meetings of Hadassah were first held in a building on Middle Street at the site of the present Canal Bank. Its activities were principally connected with charitable projects for Palestine. From its very beginning Hadassah sponsored an annual drive in behalf of the Jewish National Fund. This was led by Mrs. Frank Feldman from 1915 to 1936 and by Mrs. Anna Silverman from 1936 to 1949.

In 1936 Hadassah formed its first "Youth Aliyah *minyan*", with ten women each contributing thirty-six dollars to support a child in Palestine for two years. Mrs. Ruth Rosenberg was a chairman of the project. From 1937 to 1940, when thousands of children were being literally removed from the jaws of death in Nazi Germany, the local chapter contributed in excess of five thousand dollars annually toward this project. Hadassah also was active in the field

of Jewish education.

It is not definitely known when the local branch of Mizrachi, representing the Orthodox Zionist movement, was formed, but it was around 1919. The group was organized in the home of Abraham S. Ginsburg, in the presence of Rabbi Meier Berlin, then general secretary of the World Mizrachi Organization. Abraham Seigal was its first president and he was succeeded by Rabbi David Essrig, Abraham A. Ginsburg, Saul Shulman and Jacob Rubinsky.

The aim of Mizrachi has been the establishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land, based on the principles of traditional Jewish law. In Portland its activities have been confined chiefly to fund raising for Mizrachi projects.

A Women's Mizrachi group was organized in 1927 by Mrs. Joshua Mereminsky who was succeeded as leader by Mrs. Abraham Miller, Mrs. Peretz Zafran, Mrs. Harry Simansky, Mrs. I. Edward Cohen, Mrs. Morris Bekritsky and Mrs. Michael Moskowitz.

From 1900 until about 1920, the Jewish population of Portland increased from one thousand to approximately three thousand. During this period there came into existence a network of charitable and social organizations, a few of which still flourish. The multiplicity of social clubs was a sign of robustness but the ephemeral character of many of them indicated a social instability which would be corrected with the eventual maturing of the community. It is to be lamented, however, that many of the organizations which flourished in the earlier period, upon departing, effaced their "footprints from the sands of time." This chapter would have been much richer in human detail if the organizations and their leading personalities had possessed a poetic sense and had not been impervious to historic insight.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER VII

[1]Among the early members of the Gemileth Chasodim were Abraham J. Bernstein, Isaac Briggs, Shay Briggs, Berel Ginzberg, Shneur Genss, L. Harrison, Jacob W. Levinsky, Philip Levinsky, Emil Karvalsky, David Judelsohn, Michael Judelsohn, David I. Rudorsky, Simon Lubin, Isaac Santosky and Simon Santosky.

[2]Prominent among those who directed the Gemileth Chasodim throughout the years were Maurice Markson, Oscar Tabachnick, Abraham Seigal and Jacob Rubinsky.

Additional members of its committee included Hyman Bernstein, Jacob Citrin, William Goodman, Myer Karlin, Samuel Novick, Joseph Oransky, Judge Louis Bernstein and Philip Reuben.

Special mention must be made of Jacob Sapiro who has served as treasurer of the organization from 1926 to the present.

[3]Among those who have directed the activities of the United Hebrew Charities throughout the years were Samuel Rosenberg, Oscar Tabachnick, Samuel Sacknoff, William Goodman, Judge Louis Bernstein, Irving Rothstein and Philip Reuben.

[4]From a sketchy **"History of the United Hebrew Charities"**, by Irving Rothstein.

[5]The certificate was signed by Joseph S. Bernstein, president; Myer Karlin, treasurer; Lazarus Abrahamson, Max Robinson, Samuel Rosenberg, Isaac Santosky and Benjamin Press. Henry N. Taylor acted as attorney for the incorporators and was listed as "Clerk." Benjamin Press, the only signer of the certificate still living, now resides in New York City.

[6]Among those who administered this program were Philip Silverman, Benjamin Fireman and Morris Crasnick. Myer Lerman assumed responsibility for transients in 1945.

[7]Its first officers were Morris Weisberg, president; Jacob Cox, treasurer; Carl Rudder, financial secretary; and Saul Shulman, recording secretary.

[8]The Workmen's Circle in Portland remained active until 1952 when it was disbanded.

[9]From the **Dedicatory Program of the Jewish Community Center**, November 13, 1938.

[10]Among the active charter members were David Beckelman, Jacob H. Berman, Israel Bernstein, Abraham Cohen, Samuel H. Comeras, Dr. John L. Davis, Joseph Druker, Abraham Goodman, David Kriger, Israel Marcus, Morris Oransky, Joseph Oransky, Samuel Robinson, Jacob E. Rubinsky, Samuel Sacknoff, Herman Sivovlos, Harry Snyder, Henry N. Taylor, Ellis E. Waterman and Morris Waterman.

[11]The first Jewish soldier of Portland to make the supreme sacrifice in World War I was Corporal Jacob Cousins of Company C, 328th Infantry Regiment. He was killed in action at Meuse-Argonne, France, on October 14, 1918. A memorial in his honor was unveiled on the Eastern Promenade on September 22, 1935 by members of the Jacob Cousins Post, No. 99, of the Jewish War Veterans.

[12]In March 1912 the Y.W.H.A. was incorporated as a social and charitable organization, with Jacob H. Berman as attorney for the group. Seven names appear on the Certificate of Incorporation: Annie I. Matson, president; Ada Erlick, vice-president; Fannie I. Rodman, financial secretary; Etta R. Sivovlos, recording secretary; Gertrude Kriger, treasurer; Minnie Maimon and Elizabeth R. Kriger.

[13]Miss Ida Goffin served as president of the Y.W.H.A. for seven years. Succeeding presidents were Mrs. Jacob Green, Mrs. Harry Carvel, Miss Gertrude Potter, Mrs. Maurice B. Cohen, Mrs. Edward J. Berman and Mrs. Theodore Wasserman.

[14]The records of the lodge are no longer extant, but the following men have been verified as being among the original charter members: David Beckelman, Dr. Elias Caplan, Dr. George Goldberg, Samuel Bramson, Mark Levine, Maurice Markson, Max L. Pinansky, Jacob Rosenberg, Samuel Rosenberg, David Schwartz, S. L. Silverman, and Henry Taylor.

[15]Succeeding presidents were Samuel Rosenberg, Dr. Cyrus K. Briggs, Max L. Pinansky, Jacob Sapiro, Harold A. Meyers, Hyman H. Silverman,

Robert Clenott, Dr. George Goldberg and Abraham Breitbard.

[16]Active in the ladies auxiliary were Bessie Barron, Mrs. J. Bloch, Sadie Brickman, Bertha Deane, Ida Emanuel, Rose Huberman, Edith Meyers, Alice Modes, Mrs. D. Needleman, Dorothy Schwarts, Ida Snider, Bessie Tellan and Edith Tellan.

[17]Saul Shulman recalls that when the club learned of the impending arrival of these two leaders in Portland, en route by train to Canada, they obtained the services of a military band from one of the local forts. They then serenaded the train and its several hundred Jewish Legion volunteers during their stop-over in Portland. Finally, as a token of their affection and esteem, they lifted Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi into the air and carried them to their train where they bade them a fond farewell.

[18]David I. Rubinoff, Samuel Barnstone and Harry Jacobs succeeded him as president.

[19]Succeeding presidents of the organization included Mesdames Joseph S. Bernstein, Max W. Simonds, Abraham H. Simonds, Harry Botwick, Samuel Kates, Arnold Goodman, Morris Cox and Sidney Carnam.

Additional charter members of the organization were Dr. Cecelia Fieldman, and Mesdames Mark Levine, Goldie Davidson, Samuel Sacknoff, Abraham J. Bernstein, Elder Markson, Frank Feldman, Myer Karlin and Philip Abrahamson.

CHAPTER VIII

JEWS IN PUBLIC LIFE TO 1924

During the first quarter of the present century, the Jews of Portland began to exhibit a keen interest in the city's political life. Jews stood for election to the City Council and several candidates were successful on more than one occasion. The promise of American life, the opportunities of political equality and the equality of political opportunities, appealed strongly to both the long established Jewish residents and newcomers. And the pride of the Jewish community in the ability of some of its members to win public office enhanced and furthered Jewish interest in public life.

One factor that enabled Jews to run successfully for office was the ward system that prevailed until 1923 when the city manager form of government was adopted. Previous to that year, Portland was governed by a mayor and City Council, the latter consisting of two bodies: the Board of Aldermen, as the upper chamber, and the Common Council, as the lower chamber. The members of both bodies were elected by the constituents in whose wards they stood for election. Ward 3, which embraced the chief Jewish residential area, sent several Jews to the City Council, until abolition of the old form of government.

It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that Samuel Rosenberg was elected to the Common Council in 1898 and was thus the first Jew to hold elective political office in Portland. In 1893 he was appointed assistant assessor of Portland. From 1904 to 1910 he was an Overseer of the Poor, serving as chairman of the Overeers of the Poor from 1907 to 1910. Rosenberg also served on the State Board of Charities and Corrections from 1919 to 1921.

Harry M. Taylor served on the Common Council in 1907 and 1908, Samuel Davis in 1909 and 1910, and Oscar Tabachnick in 1911, 1912 and 1913. Henry N. Taylor served on the Common Council in 1914 and 1915, and then was elected to the Board of Aldermen two years. He served as chairman of the Board of Aldermen for six months before resigning to enter the Navy during World War I. Edward A. Simon served on the Common Council in 1916, 1917 and 1918, and Morris Sacknoff served there in 1917

and as an Alderman in 1918 and 1919.

Samuel Davis, who served on the Board of Aldermen in 1920 and 1921, enjoyed an unusual experience as chairman in 1920. For it was during that time that Mayor Charles B. Clarke was not available for business one day. Samuel Davis was then designated as "Mayor for the day." This distinction was never forgotten by his friends.

The last Jews to serve on the Common Council were David Sivovlos in 1922, and Louis Bernstein in 1923, the final year of the old form of government.

In order to keep within certain chronological limits, we will record in a later chapter Jewish achievements in public life from the late 1920's until the present. There we will include not only references to public office but also activity in the professions, civic organizations, organized sports and economic life. At this point, however, mention should be made of Jacob H. Berman who served as the County Attorney for Cumberland County in 1916, and Israel Bernstein who served as an Overseer of the Poor in 1919 and 1920, and as a member of the School Committee from 1921 to 1923. The former is a grandson of Shiah Berman, one of the early Jewish settlers in Portland. The latter is the son of the late Abraham J. and Sarah Bernstein, who were mentioned in previous chapters on religious and philanthropic activity.

CHAPTER IX

RELIGIOUS LIFE (1920-1942)

In 1919 the dissident group which had departed from Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh obtained the old premises of Congregation Sharith Israel on Middle Street and called itself Congregation Adas Israel. When Rabbi Chaim Shohet became spiritual leader of this new congregation, Rabbi David Essrig was engaged by Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh.

Congregation Adas Israel met on Middle Street while preparations were being made for a new synagogue building. Jacob E. Rubinsky was its first president and Harry Fireman served briefly as treasurer until that post was taken over by Joseph Shur who held it for more than twenty years.[1]

In 1921 the new congregation purchased a building on Congress Street and proceeded to renovate it. Before the new synagogue was ready Rabbi Chaim Shohet died and was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Moses Shohet, who had been serving in Bangor. The decision on succession was, in fact, made on the cemetery grounds shortly after interment of the elder Rabbi Shohet. As a memorial to its first rabbi, the new congregation changed its name to "Etz Chaim" (Tree of Life).

From its inception, Congregation Etz Chaim was known in Portland as the "modern *shul*", for many leaders of the defunct Modern Synagogue Society joined it and encouraged innovations. As a concession to the younger element, an English-speaking rabbi, Dr. Phineas Israeli, was engaged to serve concurrently with Rabbi Moses Shohet. Rabbi Israeli delivered English sermons and directed activities for the younger members. He introduced late Friday evening services and congregational singing.

On October 18, 1921, the Sisterhood of Etz Chaim Synagogue was organized in the home of Mrs. Elder Markson who was elected its first president. The other officers were Mrs. Samuel Davis, vice-president, Mrs. Jacob E. Rubinsky, treasurer, Mrs. Mark Levine, financial secretary, and Mrs. Harold A. Meyers, recording secretary. The sisterhood purchased the ark and the Torah scroll which was presented to the congregation by Mrs. Meyers on June 4, 1922, at ceremonies dedicating the new synagogue. It also sponsored the

first bazaar undertaken by a Jewish religious organization in Portland, in December 1922.[2]

It was during this period that an effort was made by Rabbi Israeli to bring Congregation Etz Chaim into the Conservative movement. On several occasions he appealed to the directors to affiliate with United Synagogue of America. The closest step in that direction was taken at a meeting of the synagogue's board of directors in May 1926. The minutes read as follows:

> Rabbi Israeli addressed the directors appealing to them to join the United Synagogue of America and extolling the work of that organization, and it was voted that every member be asked to pay 25 cents before the High Holidays and the sum collected be sent to the organization as dues.

The decision, however, had no practical results and Congregation Etz Chaim remained in the Orthodox camp.

Another new organization which came into being during this period was the Mount Sinai Cemetery Association. It was incorporated on November 26, 1920, with Morris Sacknoff as president, Joseph Mack as vice-president, David Schwartz as treasurer, and Julius Comeras as secretary. The signatures of Samuel Seiger and Max Oransky also appear on the certificate of incorporation.

The land for the cemetery, consisting of one and a half acres off Warren Avenue in Portland, was first purchased as a cemetery in 1894 by the Portland Hebrew Benevolent Association.[3]

Later, a Hebrew Synagogue Society came into being and held title to the same land jointly with the older burial association. When the new Mount Sinai Cemetery Association was formed, through merger of the two organizations, it received title to the land in separate deeds from each of the older groups.[4] William Goodman has served as president of the Mt. Sinai Cemetery Association since the death of Morris Sacknoff in 1943.

Despite the division of community strength, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh was able to make significant progress in the early 1920's and in 1926 it discharged its mortgage. This was accomplished to a great extent through the assistance of its sisterhood which was organized in 1925. The officers of the sisterhood during this period were Mrs. Harry Miller, president; Mrs. Louis Helfont, vice-president; Mrs. Hyman Bernstein, treasurer; and Mrs. B. Diamon, secretary.

On May 3, 1926 an elaborate celebration was held in the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue on the occasion of the burning of the mort-

gage and the first anniversary of the sisterhood. The gala affair also served as a farewell party for Rabbi David Essrig who left for California after serving for nearly eight years.

The synagogue was gaily decorated with banners and the Zionist flag stood alongside the American flag. Community differences were laid aside for the day and all congregations participated in the celebration. The synagogue, recently remodeled at a cost of $17,000 provided a festive setting. No less than five major speeches were delivered, according to the local press. Mentioned as speakers were Jacob H. Berman, Max L. Pinansky, Israel Bernstein, Morris Sacknoff and Hyman Bernstein.[5]

Harmony between the two principal congregations, however, was at best superficial, for the competition between them created a condition bordering on chaos in the community's religious life. The die was cast when Congregation Etz Chaim established its own Vaad Ha-Kashruth in 1921, in competition with the old Vaad sponsored by the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue. As a result intense rivalry ensued.

Observers during this period recalled that elders of the community would not partake of food served at weddings and similar joyous occasions if its preparation was supervised by the rabbi of the other synagogue. Nor would they attend the circumcision of their grandchildren if it was performed by a *mohel* other than their own. If a family celebrated a joyous occasion in one synagogue, it usually forfeited similar privileges in the other. Or if a *meshulach*, or itinerant fund raiser, made an appeal in one synagogue, he was not welcome in the other.

The economic effects of this competition were felt sharply. The minutes of the Vaad Ha-Shechita of Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue, for November 22, 1925 confirm this, for we read therein:

> Moved that every director must buy his meat from our butcher and kill *chaies* (animals) at our *rav*. Committee of five to see how to raise (money to cover) the deficiency in the treasury for next year.

In the final analysis, it was the pressing economic burden resulting from parallel and competing kashruth programs that compelled a serious examination of merger plans. The community could not afford to maintain two rabbis, two *shochtim* and two slaughterhouses.

For two years, committees representing both synagogues met under the chairmanship of Abraham S. Levey to devise ways and

means of rationalizing the operations of their respective synagogues. Several plans were considered. One would allow Congregation Etz Chaim to retain Rabbi Israeli as its spiritual leader and permit Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh to engage a rabbi who would then be recognized as "Rabbi of Portland." He also would be required to deliver occasional sermons in Etz Chaim Synagogue. Another plan called for hiring one rabbi by both congregations and the establishment of one Vaad Ha-Shechita. Neither plan was easily negotiated and the upshot of the lengthy deliberations was quite different from the original intention. The Vaad Hoir, or Jewish Community Council, came into being to supervise the religious affairs of Portland Jewry.

The Vaad Hoir was organized in 1929 with Abraham S. Levey as its first president and Saul Shulman as secretary. Prior to the assumption by the Vaad of its comprehensive functions, the individual synagogues put their affairs in order. By mutual agreement, Congregation Etz Chaim and Rabbi Moses Shohet terminated their long association and Rev. Myer J. Levinson, the congregation's *shochet* found a position elsewhere.[6] Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh also parted company with Rabbi Joshua Mereminsky. Its *shochet,* Rev. Harry Simansky, was retained as community *shochet* by the Vaad Hoir, and has functioned in that capacity until the present.

The actual organization of the Vaad Hoir was more comprehensive than had been originally planned, for it was made up of representatives from the three Orthodox synagogues. Congregation Anshe Sfaard soon joined the two original constituents. The supply of kosher meat was now under the supervision of the Vaad. The income derived from this enterprise, in addition to the contributions from its constituent synagogues, enabled it to subsidize the Portland Hebrew School and pay the salary of a community rabbi. The first community rabbi was Abraham Miller who came in 1930 and served for six years. He was succeeded by Rabbi Mendel Lewittes who served in Portland from 1936 until 1942.

Under the leadership of Abraham S. Levey, the Vaad Hoir functioned as the central religious organization for many years. It was Mr. Levey's aim to have the Vaad assume greater powers in time and to develop into the governing body of a Portland *kehillah.* This goal was never attained, however, due in part to the rise of the Jewish Federation of Portland in 1941. Since the Federation became a secular Vaad, controlling the collection and disbursement of all community funds, the role of the Vaad Hoir was inevitably eclipsed.[7]

In October 1934, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh marked its thirtieth anniversary with a three-day celebration. It began on Friday, October 19, with an Oneg Shabbat service and on Saturday the Talmudic study group held a great *siyyum*. The celebration was climaxed on Sunday with a dinner attended by three hundred persons. Philip Abrahamson, president of the congregation, was toastmaster, and Mrs. Israel Bernstein the principal speaker. The following notice appeared in the local press:

> "The Synagogue stands as a monument to the eternal spirit of the Jew," Mrs. Bernstein said, outlining the history of the local institution.
> The handful of Jews who were the founders were inspired by real Judaic spirit, she said.
> Mrs. Bernstein said that the Jewish religion does not embrace mere ritual for holiday and special occasions but that tenets formed a vital force for everyday life.
> She pointed out that most social service activities found their beginnings in the synagogue, including such services as visiting the sick, consoling the bereft, sheltering the aged, caring for orphans and providing temporary shelter for transients.[8]

During this period Congregation Etz Chaim also made forward strides. Its synagogue building, although well situated on Congress Street, was blocked from view by an old building which occupied the street front. This difficulty was overcome by razing the eyesore and improving the grounds. On December 7, 1937, Etz Chaim Synagogue dedicated a new ark donated by Harry Sivovlos in memory of his parents, Simon and Fanny Sivovlos. On the eve of Rosh Ha-Shanah, 1941, the new entrance and the landscaped approaches to the synagogue were dedicated. The work was made possible through bequests in the wills of Nathan Markson and Samuel Davis, the latter a past president of the congregation and a former city official.

Until the end of 1942, the position of Orthodoxy in Portland seemed secure. A contributing factor to this state of affairs was the successful activity of the Young Israel Club. Founded in 1931 by I. Edward Cohen, Young Israel attracted to its ranks a large segment of the Jewish youth and guided them through a variety of religious and social activities. With the cooperation of Rabbi Mendel Lewittes, Philip Abrahamson and Jacob Rubinsky, Young Israel remained a potent force in Portland's religious life until

the early 1940's when it quietly went out of existence, a veritable war casualty.

Under the aegis of Young Israel, daily and Sabbath services were held in the two large synagogues. On Sunday mornings, the "*minyan* breakfast" was introduced, with religious services followed by a meal and then a study period. As an added activity, Young Israel sponsored athletic teams for younger boys, who were then encouraged to participate in the religious life of the parent organization.

The impact of Young Israel soon made itself felt on synagogue life. Its religious services had acquired a reputation for decorum, dignity and spirited congregational participation. In addition to being a medium for training youth in synagogue participation, it was regarded as a model for adult congregations to emulate. Its passing marked the end of a period, not only chronologically but culturally as well. With its demise, the religious climate of Portland was soon transformed.

Another creative institution was the Portland Torah Foundation, organized by Michael Rubinsky to assist rabbinical schools in this country and abroad through the medium of a perpetual fund. To create this fund, the Portland Torah Foundation enrolled members who paid regular annual dues, distributed collection boxes and conducted special campaigns. The money raised was invested in government bonds or deposited in a bank account, with only the interest being used for the organization's educational purposes. In this manner, the principal was never diminished, but rather increased, and the Portland Torah Foundation has been able to send regular contributions to seats of Torah study.

Although Portland was still officially Orthodox until the end of this period, many Jews were dissatisfied with Orthodoxy. Since they were unable as yet to introduce the innovations they desired, they continued to comply with the established usages. In a later period, as we shall see, the opposition to Orthodoxy was channelized into a new movement and a new congregation.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER IX

[1]Other presidents of the congregation were Samuel Davis, Joseph Mack, Louis Weinman, Udell Bramson and Herman Sivovlos.

[2]Other presidents of the sisterhood included: Mesdames Samuel Davis, Elias Caplan, S. Mitnick, Edward Chapman, Fannie Hoffman, Louis Matson, Solomon Turetsky, Benjamin Troen, Sol Branz, Sam Kaatz, William Punsky and Jacob Levinsky.

[3]**Cumberland County, Registry of Deeds, Book 610, page 424.**

[4]The Portland Hebrew Benevolent Association deeded the land to the Mount Sinai Cemetery Association on November 30, 1920, and the Hebrew Synagogue Society did the same on December 29, 1920. (**Cumberland County, Registry of Deeds**, Book 1071, pages 182-183). At the time of transfer, David Schwartz was president of the Portland Hebrew Benevolent Burial Association and Samuel Press was its authorized agent. Morris Sacknoff was president of the Hebrew Synagogue Society.

[5]Among the directors of Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh at that time were Morris Sacknoff, Abraham S. Levey, Louis Rice, Samuel Comeras, Harry Miller, Abraham A. Greenberg, Max Oransky, Samuel Sacknoff, Zissel Boxstein and Hyman Boxstein.

[6]Rabbi Israeli had left Portland previously because of illness.

[7]Succeeding Mr. Levey as president of the Vaad Hoir were Morris Sacknoff, William Goodman and Louis Weinman.

[8]**Portland Press-Herald**, October 22, 1934.

CHAPTER X

NEW SOCIAL AND FRATERNAL GROUPS

In this chapter we shall sketch briefly the rise of organizations that came into existence in the period between the two world wars.

The Portland Council of Jewish Women was organized on October 20, 1920, with twenty-one members, and its first regular meeting was held on November 17, 1920, at the home of Mrs. Maurice Markson. During that brief interval the membership increased to fifty-eight, and six months later it reached one hundred and fifty.

At the first meeting Mrs. Markson was elected president; Mrs. Jacob Scheibe, first vice-president; Mrs. Jacob Rosenberg, second vice-president; Mrs. Benjamin Press, recording secretary; and Mrs. Jacob Sapiro, treasurer.[1]

From the outset, the Portland Council of Jewish Women became active in education and social service. It assisted the Portland Hebrew School by providing funds for maintenance and cooperated with the Y.W.H.A. in directing the Sunday School. The Council sponsored social affairs for the benefit of the United Hebrew Charities and carried on its own social service.

When immigrant ships landed in Portland in 1923 and 1924, and the passengers were maintained on House Island, the Council of Jewish Women set up kosher kitchens there under the supervision of Mrs. Lena Perry. It also assisted immigrants in entering this country by communicating with their relatives and then speeding them to their destinations. In several instances it prevented deportation of individuals by appealing directly to authorities on their behalf.

During the 1920's especially, the Council of Jewish Women was active in getting Jews to register and vote in political elections. It sponsored lectures on all vital questions of the day, encouraged aliens to join Americanization classes and furnished books to the Portland Public Library.

After the rise of Hitler in Germany the problem of Jewish refugeeism became acute. The Council set up a German-Jewish Refugee Committee which organized fund raising for relief of refugees from Nazism. As a reaction to Nazism, the Zionist groups

in Portland also became more active, and the Jewish community was required to mobilize itself for ever increasing fund campaigns. But before these new developments are discussed, it is necessary to consider two new Jewish organizations which were formed in the late 1920's, the Portland Veritans Club and the Jewish Home for Aged.

The Veritans Club was founded on March 8, 1925 by Dr. Elias Caplan, Harold A. Meyers, Dr. Cyrus Briggs, Maurice Rudman, and Henry N. Taylor. It probably was New England's first Jewish service club. It was active in welfare work and projected several plans for non-sectarian service work, although its membership was entirely Jewish.

Dr. Elias Caplan was elected first president of the Veritans Club, with Dr. George Goldberg as vice-president, Henry N. Taylor as secretary and Harry Turitz as treasurer.

Starting as a local group, the club soon aroused interest in other communities, and several branches were organized elsewhere in New England. In 1928 plans were made to expand eyen beyond New England and to become a truly national service organization. Under the leadership of Dr. Elias Caplan, the founders constituted themselves a temporary national committee and summoned a convention of all the branches during the summer of 1928. As a result of this convention, definite plans were prepared for creation of a national Veritans Club. But within a year or two the organization ceased to function.

It is not too clear from available sources why the Veritans Club disappeared so suddenly. One possible reason was the great depression starting in 1929 which affected adversely even well established service clubs. The many dislocations and maladjustments in social life arising from the depression may very well have contributed the *coup de grace* to the bold and optimistic dreams of the Portland Veritans Club.

On May 2, 1927, members of the Y.W.H.A. organized the auxiliary of the Jewish Home for Aged. Since 1911 a home for Jewish aged had been one of the principal objectives of the Y.W.H.A., but the project was deferred in favor of a campaign for a home for destitute children. When this failed, interest in a home for aged was revived and small sums of money were collected over the years and set aside for the project. With the formal organization of the auxiliary, the goal was brought nearer realization.

The first officers of the Auxiliary were Mrs. Samuel Seiger, president; Mrs. Harry Potter, first vice-president; Dr. Cecelia Fieldman, second vice-president; Mrs. Benjamin Goldberg, recording

secretary; Mrs. Israel Bernstein, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Herman Sivovlos, financial secretary; and Mrs. Samuel Davis as treasurer.[2]

A committee appointed to find a site for the home recommended purchase of the land and buildings between 142 and 164 North Street. In May 1927, five hundred dollars was deposited to bind the deal, and on June 21, 1927, the land and buildings were purchased by the Auxiliary.

The Jewish Home for Aged was incorporated under Maine law as a charitable institution on December 13, 1927.[3] Its first officers were Dr. John L. Davis, president; Samuel Bernstein, vice-president; Mrs. Benjamin Goldberg, secretary; and Samuel L. Bramson, treasurer.[4] Shortly afterward Dr. John L. Davis died and Morris Sacknoff was elected president, holding that position, except for one year, until his death in 1943.[5]

Ground breaking ceremonies for the Home were held on November 16, 1928 and the cornerstone was laid on January 13, 1929. The Home was officially opened on September 15, 1929 in the presence of Governor William Tudor Gardiner of Maine and other dignitaries. At its inception the Jewish Home for Aged had only one resident, Philip P. Silverman. In January 1930, the number was increased to seven, and by August of the same year to fifteen. The peak was reached in 1945 with thirty-five residents.

The course of the Home's development paralleled that of many similar institutions. In its earliest years it was administered by members of its board, but as it grew the need for full-time direction became evident. Thus, in 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Pravatiner were engaged as superintendent and matron and served for several years. They were succeeded by Mr. and Mrs. Max Shereshevsky who served from June 1937 until April 1945.

When it appeared that facilities of the Home would not suffice for future needs, plans for an additional wing were formulated in 1946 by a building committee headed by William Goodman.[6] On September 17, 1950, ground was finally broken for the new structure, and on November 25, 1951, the wing was dedicated.

The Jewish Home provides not only comfort to its aged residents but medical and nursing care as well. With the creation of a new infirmary wing it has expanded its services to include short and long-term convalescent care. Since August 1, 1954, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Glickstein have served as executive director and house mother respectively.

The rise of Nazism in the 1930's led to a heightening of Jewish

consciousness in the Portland Jewish community as elsewhere in the world. This reaction was expressed in the growth of new defense organizations, an awakened interest in Zionism and the expansion of fund raising efforts for refugee relief.

In the field of Jewish defense, B'nai B'rith played a leading role on the national scene. Despite the demise of two B'nai B'rith lodges in Portland, interest in the organization was not completely dulled, and a new lodge was incorporated on December 5, 1936, as Cumberland Lodge, No. 1137, B'nai B'rith, with Maurice E. Rosen as its first president.[7]

The purpose of the lodge, as stated in its articles of incorporation, was

> . . . to have as its basic platform the unity of all Jews, regardless of congregational affiliation or place of origin, contributing to the greater solidarity and prestige of Jewry through its capacity to bring together the many elements in a common purpose, the promotion of their highest interests and those of humanity, and the consummation of a better understanding among Jews and between Jews and non-Jews.[8]

Among its other activities, Cumberland Lodge lent its support to formation of the Maine Hillel Foundation, serving Jewish students at Bates College, Colby College and the University of Maine.

Under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Zolov, who was elected president of the State of Maine B'nai B'rith Council, the lodge assumed an active role in combatting resort discrimination in Maine. In 1952 the Council introduced a corrective bill in the Maine legislature, and Dr. Zolov and Sidney W. Wernick testified in its behalf. The legislature, however, rejected the bill, although it was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and had the support of many labor, civic and church groups, including the Catholic Diocese.

In addition to its corrective program, Cumberland Lodge provided audio-visual materials to public schools and sponsored radio and television programs on democratic themes. Its sister organization, Cumberland Chapter, No. 236, B'nai B'rith, was organized in 1939, with Mrs. Abraham Kramer as its first president.[9] During the war years the chapter was active in recreational programs for service men, and received citations from the U.S.O. and the United States Treasury Department. Although primarily a lodge auxiliary, Cumberland Chapter has sponsored independent programs of service work in hospitals, libraries and schools.

Another new Jewish defense organization was Jacob Cousins Post, No. 99, Jewish War Veterans, which came into being on January 3, 1935, with David Sivovlos as comander.[10] In cooperation with its national organization, founded in 1896, the local chapter has devoted itself to securing legislation in the interest of veterans, to a program of service in behalf of its members and to defending the honor of the Jewish people against detractors.

Following the second World War, membership of the Jacob Cousins Post was augmented by a new generation of veterans and its program moved forward rapidly.[11] One of its members, Silas Jacobson, achieved national recognition as vice-commander of the First Region and as a member of the national executive committee.

In May 1936 an auxiliary of the Jacob Cousins Post was formed, with Mrs. Maurice Davis as president.[12] Among other activities, the auxiliary developed an extensive program of hospital service for veterans at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Kittery, Maine, and the Marine Hospital in Portland. The entrance of the United States into the Korean War in 1950 led to a further expansion of its hospital service program.

The growth of Jewish refugeeism as a consequence of Nazism also stimulated the Zionist movement throughout the world. Since the end of World War I Jews from many lands, mainly from Eastern Europe, began to settle in Palestine and to contribute toward the development of the new Jewish national home. But after 1933 great numbers of German Jews were compelled to seek new homes and many turned eastward to the Holy Land. Whereas in 1932, only 9,553 imigrants came to Palestine, in 1933 the number of immigrants reached 30,327, and swelled to 42,359 in 1934 and to 61,854 in 1935.[13]

The crisis of European Jewry and the growing importance of Palestine as a haven of refuge aroused American Jewry. In Portland several new Zionist organizations came into being, exerting a powerful influence. The first was the Jewish National Fund Council which coordinated the land-purchase programs of several Zionist groups, including Hadassah, Poale Zion, Degel Zion Camp and Mizrachi. Among its leaders were Philip Abrahamson, Max W. Simonds, Irving Rothstein and Samuel Nelson.

The Portland Zionist District, a branch of the Zionist Organization of America, was founded in 1934. Robert Clenott, organizer and first president,[14] served until 1941. From a mere handful of members, the organization reached an enrollment of three hundred in 1944. In that year the District also contributed to the war effort by promoting the sale of fifty thousand dollars in war bonds.

In 1938 a branch of Pioneer Women, the Women's Labor Zionist Organization of America, was formed in Portland. Its first officers were Mrs. Myer Levitan, president; Mrs. Max Cooper, first vice-president; Mrs. Sonia Astor, second vice-president; Mrs. Saul Shulman, treasurer; and Mrs. Celia Lerman, secretary.[15]

The growth in the number of Zionist organizations encouraged formation of the Portland Zionist Council in 1940, to coordinate their activities. In addition, the Council sponsored educational programs and holiday celebrations, in conjunction with the Jewish Community Center. Saul G. Chason, first president of the Portland Zionist Council, served until June 1944, when he was elected president of the Maine Zionist Council. Irving Rothstein succeeded him in the leadership of the local organization.

We will now turn our attention to the development of two new institutions that have played a central role in the life of Portland Jewry: the Jewish Community Center and the Jewish Federation.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER X

[1]Succeeding Council presidents included Mesdames Jacob Sapiro, Israel Bernstein, Samuel Sacknoff, Benjamin Press, Louis Matson, Jesse Rosenberg, Richard Wilkes, Benjamin Zolov, Lewis Bernstein and Aaron Blumenthal.

[2]Succeeding presidents were Mrs. Max Kaplan, Mrs. Samuel M. Schatz and Mrs. Benjamin Lerman.

[3]The Jewish Home for Aged has also been incorporated in New Hampshire and Vermont. Residents of these states are eligible for admission to the Home which solicits funds in these areas.

[4]The original directors of the Jewish Home for Aged were Dr. John L. Davis, Morris Sacknoff, Samuel Bernstein, Samuel L. Bramson, Max Oransky, Joseph Brenner, Mrs. Eli Perry and Mrs. Benjamin Goldberg.

[5]Other presidents of the Jewish Home for Aged were Harry Potter, James Stein, Joseph W. Larkin and William Goodman.

[6]Other committee members were Charles Rosenbloom, Abraham Seigal and Philip Reuben of Portland, Samuel S. Goodman of Bangor, and Joseph R. Wilner of Auburn.

[7]Succeeding presidents were Dr. George Goldberg, David I. Rubinoff, Ralph Lamport, Udell Bramson, Dr. Robert Weinstein, Abraham L. Kramer, Dr. David Brownstone, Samuel King, Dr. Benjamin Zolov, Benjamin Bernstein, Maurice Ross, Arthur Fink, David Royte, Saul Brenerman, Samuel J. Shatz, Samuel Brynes, Cyrus K. Briggs and Louis Drogin.

[8]Incorporators of the Lodge were Udell Bramson, Abraham Kramer, Richard B. Wilkes, Samuel Goldfarb, Thomas Livingston, Lester E. Sapiro, Jacob Sapiro, Dr. Elias Caplan and Ralph Lamport.

[9]Succeeding presidents were Mesdames Ralph Lamport, Benjamin Zolov, Benjamin Bernstein, Myer Goldberg, Joseph LaRees, Samuel Brynes, Louis Drogin, William Sidman, George Robinson and Henry Levine.

[10]Charter members of the post included Abraham I. Weisman, David Sivovlos, William E. Perlin, Leo Golodetz, Lewis Abramson, Harry Weinman, Sam T. Shrensker, Benjamin Troen, Louis Grinker, Manuel Berenson, Maurice Davis, Abraham L. Venner, Samuel Ross, Philip Gold, Philip Solomon, Abraham Bernstein, Louis Bernstein and Max Rice.

Succeeding David Sivovlos as commander were Abraham I. Weisman, William E. Perlin, Maurice Davis, Manuel Berenson, Harry Venner, Melvin Jacobson, Silas Jacobson, Harold Ross, Myer Marcus, Hyman Jacobson and Arthur M. Waterman.

[11]Among Jews of Portland who lost their lives during active service in World War II were Samuel M. Citrin, Benjamin A. Cox, Edward R. Goldstein, Louis S. Lane, Herbert F. Meyers, Sidney R. Miller and Max Weinstein.

[12]Succeeding Mrs. Davis as president of the Auxiliary were Mesdames Morris Benjamin, William E. Perlin, Manuel Berenson, Benjamin Goldberg, David Cutler, Sam Lubovitz and Max Milstein.

[13]**To Dwell in Safety**, by Mark Wischnitzer, page 290.

[14]Succeeding Robert Clenott as president of the Portland Zionist District were Saul G. Chason, Harold P. Nelson, Harold J. Potter, Morris Greenberg, Franklyn Golding, Abraham H. Simonds, Harry Garon, Dr. David Davidson and Benjamin Lazarus.

[15]Succeeding presidents of the organization included Mesdames Max Cooper, David Seigal, Nathan Cope, Morris Sclar, Jack Levine, Abraham Stolkner, Miss Leah Geron and Mrs. Seymour Nathanson.

CHAPTER XI

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

The founding of the Jewish Community Center marked a turning point in the development of communal life, for it provided for the first time a focal point for all the varied activities of the diverse groups among Portland Jewry. The real history of the Jewish Community Center began in 1937 with the formal organization of a directorate and the election of officers. Although a center building on Wilmot Street had been used for thirteen years previous to this date, it served principally as a meeting hall of constituent organizations, and lacked a philosophy, program and organization of its own.

On November 1, 1937 a meeting was held at the home of Louis Bernstein for the purpose of creating a new Jewish community center and acquiring ample quarters. The officers elected were Louis Bernstein, president; Mrs. Edward J. Berman, vice-president; Edward J. Berman, treasurer; Mrs. Theodore Wasserman, secretary; and Maurice Davis, clerk.[1]

At a mass meeting in the Community Center on Wilmot Street on November 15, 1937, the public was exhorted to support the proposal for a new center. Louis Bernstein presided and major speeches in favor of the project were delivered by Miss Edith Palmer, Edward J. Berman and Rabbi Mendell Lewittes. The result was a strong vote of approval and plans were made to secure a suitable building.

The former Pythian Temple on Cumberland Avenue, erected in 1910, was surveyed by a special committee consisting of Morris Sacknoff, Louis Bernstein and Mrs. Edward J. Berman. They reported that this five-storied building, although badly in need of repairs, could be purchased for $17,500. A campaign for funds was launched in February 1938 with a goal of $29,600. An immediate lift to the campaign was given by directors of the Jewish Community Center, who pledged $15,000 among themselves.

In the meantime a curious incident took place. At a special meeting of the board of directors held on March 21, 1938, President Louis Bernstein informed the directors that, due to a technical error, the original incorporation of the Jewish Community

Center was legally invalid and that all the actions undertaken by the board were illegal. Thus, on March 17, 1938 seven of the directors became incorporators of a new Jewish Community Center and a new Certificate of Incorporation was properly prepared. It was now necessary for the board of directors to confirm anew all actions in regard to fund raising, building purchase, etc. These plans were quickly ratified and the Jewish Community Center became a legally constituted organization.

During 1938 a transformation of communal life took place. A large sum of money was spent on remodeling and repairing the new Center building under the direction of a building committee consisting of Abraham S. Levey, chairman, Abraham Seigal and Jacob Citrin. New equipment was purchased for the gymnasium, bowling alley, lounges and meeting rooms. Under the guidance of the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Center was projected not merely as a meeting place for clubs but as a creative force, dedicated through its programs to the satisfaction of recreational, cultural and communal needs.

In June 1938 Norman I. Godfrey of Stamford, Connecticut was appointed first executive director of the Center, and in August, the Policy Committee, headed by Joseph Wigon drew up a statement of aims and policies.

On Sunday, November 13, 1938, the new Jewish Community Center was blessed by Rabbi Mendell Lewittes at a ceremony in the Etz Chaim Synagogue. That afternoon the Center opened its doors to the public and inaugurated its Dedication Week under the general chairmanship of Abraham S. Levey with special programs each day.[2] With the dedication over, the Center began to implement its program.

Shortly after the opening of the Center, the Y.W.H.A. announced its dissolution as a separate entity. Its role was then taken over by the new Center Women's Club. In January 1939 the Y.M.H.A. adopted as its project the building of a Center library. It equipped the reading rooms with furniture, magazines and Yiddish and English newspapers. In February 1939 David Lavin, president of the Y.M.H.A., presented a plaque to the Center Library, thereby announcing its official opening.

In the first flush of its youth, the Center witnessed a mushrooming of many affiliated clubs. For the young children there were the Judeans for boys of ages nine to eleven directed by Saul Sheriff; the Junior Maccabees for boys from eleven to thirteen years, led by Edward D. Sacknoff and Abraham Gordon; and the Tel Hai group for boys from thirteen to fifteen directed by Daniel

Kornetsky. The Deborah Girls served the interests of the junior distaff element.

For the adults, in addition to the activities of their own groups held in the Center, special programming began to emerge. At the outset, the Education Committee chaired by Israel Bernstein scheduled several lecture series, the first dealing with the broad topic, "Can Democracy Survive?" Noted guest lecturers were invited.

As part of the Center's educational activity, a Sunday School was organized under the direction of Mrs. Barnett I. Shur. She was assisted by Mrs. Aaron Blumenthal, who conducted a class of pre-school children. And to serve the ends of both education and recreation, the Center Workshop came into being under the guidance of Gerald Waxman. It has been distinguished since its inception by the high calibre of its artistic achievements.

With the rise of the Center, Portland's first Jewish community weekly paper came into existence. Although the *Center Bulletin* was to serve principally as a house organ, its editors sought to add to its pages literary contributions from readers, and thus to enable it to assume the additional role of a literary journal. In the first issue (December 9, 1939), the new policy was announced editorially, as follows:

> The *Bulletin* will encourage creative writing. Every boy and girl, as well as older persons, will be offered the columns of this paper for any story, article, poem or feuilleton which has intrinsic literary merit. Whether this ambition can be realized will depend entirely on the cooperation of the members.

After several months the response was so negligible that the editors had to repeat and underscore their appeal. They called upon readers to submit any essay, brief biography, book review or story and confessed that if the *Bulletin* were to remain a house organ, it must be regarded as a failure. The paper, they said, would gladly increase the number of its pages to accommodate all contributions and concluded with this challenge:

> The editors, therefore are turning their offer into a challenge. If the members have the ability we believe they possess, they will accept this challenge and send in their contributions regularly from week to week. If the challenge is not accepted, then we will be forced to hang our head in shame and confess that we were in grievous error and that there is no literary talent in our midst. Have we, or have

we not, cognoscenti and literati? Who will be the first to make robust answer?

The response was deafening in its silence and the editors no longer pursued this course of action. The *Community Center Bulletin* remained principally a medium for meeting announcements and a herald for special comunity events.

During the war years, the Center cooperated with the U.S.O. in making its facilities available to service personnel. Several organizations, principally the Business Girls Club, sponsored special parties, dances and general social activities as part of the general U.S.O. program, thereby enhancing the Center's role in this activity. As a counteracting element, we must note that the military services withdrew an extremely high percentage of young Jewish men from community life, leaving the Center and the Portland Jewish community in general in a state of suspended animation. Early in 1942, Louis Bernstein joined the Army Air Force and was succeeded by Edward J. Berman as Center president.

In November 1946, Victor H. Taylor, who came to Maine in 1944 to supervise U.S.O. work for the National Jewish Welfare Board, was elected acting executive director of the Center. Shortly thereafter, on January 24, 1947, Norman I. Godfrey, who had guided development of the Center from its start, died and Mr. Taylor was named executive director.

The Center's role in initiating adult education programs after the war is briefly mentioned in a later chapter ("Education and Social Welfare"). From the outset, however, a great part of the Center's activities was geared to the recreational needs of children. As early as 1940, the Center sponsored a day camp known as Camp Jaysee but in 1949, financed by a fund set up in memory of Norman I. Godfrey, the Center purchased a large camp site on Sebago Lake about seventeen miles from Portland. This new camp has provided children with an ideal environment for their summer hours. The well integrated educational and recreational programs of the Day Camp comprise perhaps the most significant achievement of the Center's program for children.

In May 1949 two Center leaders, Louis Bernstein and Barnett I. Shur, were elected to the board of directors of the National Jewish Welfare Board. This personal honor accorded them was reflected on the Jewish Community Center of Portland as well.[3] The Center was fortunate since its inception in attracting to its leadership men who distinguished themselves in business and civic life and who worked continually for the development of

community institutions. This holds true, in no small measure, for its recent leadership, including presidents Harold J. Potter, Harold P. Nelson, Irving Small and Morris Cox.

Between January 26 and February 3, 1952, the Center observed the completion of thirteen fruitful years of activity. Once again the doors of the Center were opened wide to a gala Bar Mitzvah Week celebration under the direction of David Astor.[4] Out of the celebration emerged a call to rededication in behalf of the Jewish community's leisure interests.

The Center's contribution extended far beyond the confines of the Jewish community and its services received broad public recognition. From 1942 to 1947 it was a member of the United Community War Chest and since then it has been a beneficiary of the Portland Community Chest. Its leaders, both lay and professional, have assumed prominent roles in committees of the Community Chest and Council of Social Agencies.

Backbone of the Center has been a devoted corps of women organized on December 20, 1938 as the Center Women's Club. Mrs. Harold P. Nelson was the group's first president. Serving with her were Mrs. Maurice Rosen, first vice-president; Mrs. Leo Golodetz, second vice-president; Mrs. Carl Zolov, secretary; and Mrs. Sol Branz, treasurer.[5]

The Center is now an integral part of the Jewish community. Its growth has conditioned both the direction and intensity of the social development of Portland Jewry, for it has become a focal point of most community endeavors. With the Jewish Federation, to be considered in the following chapters, it must be regarded as the veritable center of gravity of the community.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XI

[1]The first Board of Directors included Mrs. Edward J. Berman, Israel Bernstein, Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Jacob Citrin, Mrs. Maurice Davis, Mrs. Sadie Davis, Miss Ida Goffin, William Goodman, Silas Jacobson, Mrs. Gertrude D. Kramer, Abraham S. Levey, Mrs. Anne L. Matson, Morris Sacknoff and Rabbi Mendel Lewittes (honorary member).

[2]Daily dedication chairmen and their programs included Louis Bernstein, Sunday, Dedication; Abraham Seigal, Monday, Jewish Cultural Day and Hadassah Reception; Aaron Davidson Monday, Dedication of Recreation Floor; Morris Sacknoff, Tuesday, Y.M.H.A. Old Timers Reunion; Joseph Wigon, Wednesday, Organization Day — B'nai B'rith; Israel Bernstein, Thursday, Community Dance — Council of Jewish Women; Jacob Citrin, Friday, Community Religious Program; Edward J. Berman, Saturday, Youth Program — Fraternity and Sorority Dance; Leo Golo-

detz, Sunday morning, Sunday School Reception; Jacob Rubinsky, Sunday afternoon, Junior Rally; and Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Sunday Evening, Mother and Daughter Banquet.

[3]In March 1949, Louis Bernstein, then recently appointed by Governor Horace Hildreth of Maine to the post of Recorder of the Municipal Court, was named honorary president of the Jewish Community Center. He is now Judge of the Municipal Court.

Barnett I. Shur has served as Corporation Counsel for the City of Portland since 1946. He is a past president of the Jewish Community Center, served for three years as president of the New England Section, National Jewish Welfare Board, and also as national vice-president of the Jewish Center Division of the National Jewish Welfare Board.

[4]Daily chairmen and events included Mrs. Philip Schilling, Saturday, Center Youth; Rabbi Morris Bekritsky, Sunday, Hear O Israel Radio Program; Dave Astor, Sunday and Monday, Bar Mitzvah Freilach; Harold Karl Halpert, Tuesday, Center Orchestra Concert; Harold J. Potter, Wednesday, Board of Directors Meeting; Leo Golodetz and Abraham Seigal, Thursday, Golden Age Program; Rabbi Ephraim Bennett, Friday, Temple Beth El Service; Saturday, Rabbi Morris Bekritsky, Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue Service; Mr. and Mrs. Irving Rothstein, Saturday, Oneg Shabbat; Miriam Kaatz, Saturday, Young Adult Musical; Harold P. Nelson and Barnett I. Shur, Sunday, Founder's Banquet.

[5]Succeeding presidents of the Center Women's Club were Mesdames Barnett I. Shur, Myer Sacknoff, Harold J. Potter, Julius Elowitch, Henry Pollard, Frank Laben, Arnold Goodman, Edward Rodman, Philip Schilling and Jack Clayman.

CHAPTER XII

THE RISE OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION

From its earliest years the Jewish community in Portland expanded in all directions without plan or order. Like Topsy, it "jest growed." Religious, social and cultural organizations continued to produce offspring which existed side by side with their parent bodies, sharing the same interests and often the same programs. This multiplicity was a source of great inconvenience because it resulted in innumerable separate campaigns for funds and enlistment of community support.

An early attempt to coordinate activities of divergent groups was made by the Vaad Hoir in 1929. The primary purpose of the Vaad, as has been noted, was to assure the healthy growth of the orthodox community through avoidance of duplication and to provide financial support for necessary religious functions. Thus a community rabbi was engaged and a single community slaughter house established.

During the earliest years of its operation, when income from the supervision and slaughter of kosher meat and fowl warranted, the Vaad extended its support to such institutions as the Portland Hebrew School, the United Hebrew Charities and the Jewish Home for Aged. Thus it not only provided necessary funds to these worthy institutions but also reduced the demands upon the time, energy and monetary resources of the community.

With the onset of the economic depression in the early thirties, these agencies found themselves in dire distress. Income from all sources diminished and the Vaad could no longer be depended upon to provide substantial support. Some members of the community, led by Abraham S. Levey and motivated by a concern for maintaining community services at a reasonable level, sought a new solution. As they surveyed the chaos and confusion of organizational competition all around them, they concluded that the only answer was a united fund raising campaign which could mobilize the resources of an entire community in behalf of worthwhile community services.

Their initial efforts were directed toward establishment of a central fund raising agency to serve the Jewish Home for Aged,

the Portland Hebrew School, the United Hebrew Charities and the old Community Center on Wilmot Street. To achieve this goal it was necessary to engage in extended negotiations with the affected organizations and to inform all members of the community concerning the need for a more efficient, unified fund raising apparatus.

A valuable instrument of public enlightenment was the *Portland Jewish Community Guide,* an independent monthly newspaper which appeared regularly between 1934 and 1937. In an editorial appearing in the issue of April 1935, the beginnings of community federation were outlined as follows:

> The idea of a federation for our local charitable, educational and character building organizations is still in its formative stage. No definite plans have been formulated. No permanent organization has been formed. The first step, however, has been taken; and that was to sound out those institutions which would naturally form a constituent of the federation. These are: the Jewish Home for the Aged, the United Hebrew Charities, the Talmud Torah and the Community Center. The Board of Directors of each of them has voted to join and participate in such a projected undertaking and has selected delegates to meet with others at the opportune time when ways and means will be adopted.[1]

The editorial stressed the importance of arousing favorable public opinion, of awakening enthusiasm among all the Jewish organizations and of stimulating interest among unaffiliated men and women "in whom courses the rich milk of human kindness". It concluded with a statement that "the temporary organization headed by Abraham S. Levey is ready to present the idea to any organization willing to listen. In the meantime, too, the *Guide* will continue vigorously to encourage and foster the idea of a Jewish Community Chest."

In the same issue, Rabbi Abraham Miller expressed his approval of the idea as "most essential." He invoked religious sanction and precedent by noting that "the greatest acclamation that the youthful King Jehoash of Judah had received from the prophets and the people, and of whom Jewish History speaks with such an elevated tone, is to a great measure due to the fact that he urgently recommended the installation of one national chest near the Temple into which all philanthropic donations of the people might be collected – a matter which had in past years caused considerable

discontent and disorder."

Rabbi Miller concluded his appeal for support of the federation plan as follows:

> The high aim of justice is to establish a perfect balance, adjusting not alone the affairs of local philanthropic institutions, but also between groups and nations; a perfect relationship between all parts, so as to glorify the whole. From this principle all the higher aspirations of the nations, as Patriotism, Democracy and others should derive their sanction. This inspiring idea of Unity I claim and advocate not for the benefit of raising the physical and moral status of the Jewish Community of Portland alone, but for all humanity – all nations of the world, so as to develop a genius and a deathless passion for Seeing Life Whole.

Abraham S. Levey added his voice to the growing movement for federation in the same issue of the paper by insisting that

> No enterprise can succeed unless it is basically stable. A Community Chest for the Jewish Organizations and Institutions is, in my opinion, a necessity. For many years members of various units have, through one form or another, tried to secure funds necessary for maintenance of institutions which they represented. The people to whom they appealed took only a casual interest in these drives because they were not connected with the certain organizations in need of money. In many cases people were slightly offended because of the constant drain imposed upon them by the many drives. The Jewish Community Chest not only solves these problems, but will provide a splendid outlet for the enthused workers of the Portland Jewry for the support of the many institutions.

Joining in the parade of affirmative expression, Harry Potter, president of the Jewish Home for Aged, concluded his remarks as follows:

> Rather than go after a few new workers, it is our belief that we should enlist the entire Jewish community in service to its institutions and associations. If all of our people are working together for all our community needs, there will be no misunderstandings, no competition, no "hard feeling," and no distress. There can only be the friendly,

cooperative and pleasant relationship which comes from a mutual interest and which rightfully belongs to every Jewish organization in the city.

Public opinion having been aroused and a consensus among the organizations of the comunity in favor of a united campaign having been reached, a meeting of organizational delegates was held and formal approval given. A set of by-laws for the new organization was drawn up. Yet with victory in its grasp, the plan collapsed because some of the institutions withdrew their support at the last moment. Not until six years later when the Jewish Federation of Portland was formed was unity achieved in fund raising for local services.

A precursor to the Jewish Federation was the Portland United Jewish Appeal formed in 1936. The organization antedated its national namesake by three years. Prior to 1936 very small sums were raised in Portland in behalf of the United Palestine Appeal and Joint Distribution Committee which then conducted separate campaigns. However, the rising tide of persecution of Jews in Germany and in other countries following Hitler's assumption of power in 1933, imposed new and grave responsibilities upon the American Jewish community. Portland Jewry rose to the challenge. It merged the efforts of the United Palestine Appeal, Joint Distribution Committee and the newly formed National Refugee Service into a single drive known as the United Jewish Appeal. A cash campaign for $4500 was undertaken in 1936. Five thousand dollars was raised.

The United Jewish Appeal continued in existence until 1942, under the leadership of Israel Bernstein, aided by his wife, Rebecca Thurman Bernstein. With each succeeding year increasing sums of money were raised. The 1937 cash drive exceeded its goal of $7500 by one thousand dollars. In 1938 the method of solicitation was changed to permit pledges and returns soared to $15,000. By 1942, the year in which the last independent campaign of the United Jewish Appeal was held, $30,000 was raised.

As the United Jewish Appeal demonstrated its effectiveness as a fund raising instrument, its base was broadened to include not only the United Palestine Appeal, Joint Distribution Committee and the National Refugee Service but other national and overseas agencies.[2]

Portland Jewry had indeed manifested growing maturity in meeting its worldwide responsibilities and was on the threshold of important developments which would change the character

of Jewish community life.

The achievements of the Portland United Jewish Appeal Committee, as summed up by Israel Bernstein in his final report as chairman, were far-reaching:

> The Portland United Jewish Appeal Committee now completing its sixth year of service, has been more than a fund raising organization, though that effort in itself has been a great accomplishment. Of even deeper significance is the fact that this Committee has been a unifying and broadening force in the life of this Jewish Community. Our vision has been extended far beyond the boundaries of our locale; we have become vital participants in the world-wide movement to minister aid and relief to our stricken brethren wherever they may be; and to rebuild and maintain the logical and natural homeland in Palestine. We have built in this community an *esprit de corps* that insures success for every worth-while movement in our midst. Out of this Portland United Jewish Appeal Committee has come the Jewish Federation of which we shall hear more and more in the years to come.

By 1940 several pressure currents came to a head in Portland. On the one hand, the destruction of Jewish communities abroad compelled the National United Jewish Appeal to campaign for ever-increasing contributions from Jews throughout the country. On the other hand, the many separate appeals for funds by local Jewish groups conflicted with each other and diverted funds and energies from the priority needs of overseas Jewry. In addition, the local Chamber of Comerce was voicing its alarm over the oppressive burden on the community of the many separate Jewish fund raising campaigns. This was also the period when the greatest measure of efficiency in fund raising and coordination of community enterprises in support of the maximum war effort was being planned by the community-at-large, culminating in the formation of the United Community and War Chest in 1942. Thus the organization of a broader federation in Jewish community life became the order of the day.

For several years delegates from the Jewish Community Center had represented Portland at meetings of the New England Region of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. In this manner they were brought into contact with representatives of communities which had already established a unified approach to their collective responsibilities. In April 1940, some of the Jewish

women's clubs considered organization of a federation of women's clubs to avoid duplication of effort, overlapping of programs and multiple drives for funds.

On November 17, 1941, representatives of forty organizations convened at the call of Louis Bernstein, president of the Center. The delegates voted overwhelmingly to establish a Jewish federation and appointed a provisional planning committee, headed by Abraham S. Levey, to draw up a constitution and by-laws.[3]

The January 2, 1942 issue of the *Center Bulletin* published a stirring appeal for support of the federation plan under the banner headline, "Why Portland Jewry Needs a United Organization." After detailing merits of the plan, the article continued:

> It is possible, with a little study, for us to estimate how much money is raised in Portland for local welfare needs, as well as for those non-local needs not now included in the UJA campaign. Whatever the total may be, a community-wide, united effort with every organization and individual pulling together for a common purpose, should result in a more dignified and more efficient job, and capacity for greater service. Growing out of the common effort in fund raising, we shall find ourselves thinking of the community as a whole, instead of an assortment of vested interests and organization rivalries. We can plan together in terms of the welfare of the entire Jewish community, improving its existing program, providing for its unmet needs, and in general raising the entire level of Jewish life in Portland. Having established ourselves as a unified, harmonious, minority group, we shall be in a position to estimate our responsibility to the general community and fully meet it, on a level which will bring us the respect and approval of our non-Jewish fellow citizens.

Meanwhile Portland Jewry waited in anticipation for the response from organizations which were voting on participation in the proposed federation. On January 19, 1942, representatives of sixteen organizations voted in favor of the proposed Jewish Federation.[4] Three voted against and ten reported that no action had yet been taken by their governing bodies.

On March 24, 1942, the first meeting of the Jewish Federation was held in the Center.[5] Thirty directors were elected to guide the new organization.[6] Abraham S. Levey, chairman of the provisional planning committee, hailed the achievement of a united community in the folowing words:

> In this Federation we have found the solution to the problems which confront us all, and the demands of the hour have brought us all closer together in understanding our obligations and duties as Americans and Jews. It is not enough to develop unity through united planning, but we must continue and enlarge our efforts. We are engaged in a war, fought to preserve those values which are equally American and Jewish. Only by strengthening the internal fabric of our own community can we render the great good that is within us to contribute to the attainment of victory and peace.

Federation directors set to work at once in laying the foundation and defining the scope of the new organization. Article III of the by-laws listed these objectives:

> To establish and maintain a central Jewish fund raising organization.
> To coordinate the Jewish philanthropic, benevolent, educational and communal activities of Portland.
> To foster, develop, and encourage such agencies as will best promote the welfare of this community.
> To cooperate with all non-Jewish groups engaged in a similar effort to the end that the happiness, well-being and cultural life of the entire community may be enriched.
> To create and continue permanently a fund to be collected co-operatively through voluntary subscriptions, as well as by gifts, bequests, and other legal means, which fund shall be periodically disbursed by the organization, pursuant to its by-laws, for the maintenance of separate member organizations.

Abraham S. Levey was elected first president of the Jewish Federation on April 13, 1942. His co-officers were Morris Cox, first vice-president; Mrs. Israel Bernstein, second vice-president; William Goodman, treasurer; and Norman I. Godfrey, executive secretary.

On July 15, 1942 the Federation voted to participate in the United Community and War Chest campaign to be held in the fall.[7] It also voted to affiliate with the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the national Jewish agency in the field of planning and coordination of welfare services.

The first great test for the new Federation was its fund raising campaign in 1943. Would the hopes and expectations of its

founders be realized? Could the Federation at one and the same time eliminate multiple drives, yet enable the Jewish community to meet its many responsibilities?

The immediate task was to establish an over-all community budget in cooperation with all the participating organizations, then to set a campaign goal and finally to raise the money.

Sidney W. Wernick, as chairman of the Budget Committee, directed the initial operation. After a difficult period of negotiating with all groups, adjusting requirements to realities and encouraging the beneficiary groups to cooperate through compromise, the Budget Committee set a goal of $47,500. Compared with its later campaigns, this drive appeared somewhat modest. But in its time it was a most daring venture.

In an impassioned appeal to the Jewish community for support of the Federation's budgetary requirements, Mr. Wernick stated that " . . . the task of establishing one drive to replace many and of creating a balance and a plan in our charitable giving to replace chaotic, undirected and haphazard contributing cannot be minimized. We can only repeat that the experiment is great. But that it is lofty and noble we cannot doubt. Indeed, it is the inspiration of the magnitude of the work to be done that will sustain our hopes and our optimism."[8]

Under Israel Bernstein's leadership, the result of the Federation's first campaign more than justified its validity. Portland Jewry exceeded its quota and raised $55,438. The Federation was here to stay.

In August 1943, the Jewish Federation and President Abraham S. Levey were honored by Mr. Levey's appointment to the Executive Committee of the United Community and War Chest of Greater Portland. And in September, 1943 Mr. Levey was reelected president of the Jewish Federation with Mrs. Israel Bernstein, first vice-president; Barnett I. Shur, second vice-president; William Goodman, treasurer; Jacob Sapiro, chairman of the Finance Committee; and Norman I. Godfrey, executive secretary.

A significant project of the Federation during the early period should be given brief notice here, before considering the organization's further growth. That project was the War Records Survey.

In 1943 the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board urged all Jewish communities to cooperate with it by inaugurating studies of their Jewish population. The immediate aim was to accumulate accurate statistics of Jewish participation in the armed forces, but there was a secondary purpose of equal importance. This was the establishment of an accurate register

of Jewish families to serve as a basis for community planning. Under the direction of the Jewish Federation of Portland, women volunteers called "Survettes" did the canvassing. The result, as reported in November, 1943, revealed that Portland had eight hundred and thirty-eight Jewish families.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XII

[1]**Portland Jewish Community Guide**, Vol. 2, No. 4, April 1935. Israel Bernstein was editor. Associate editors were Myer Citrin, Ethel Feldman, Alice E. Modes, Edward C. Palmer, and Ruth S. Tabachnick. Saul G. Chason and Abraham S. Levey served on the business staff. Publication ceased in 1937, and only two issues of the Guide are now extant.

[2]The 1942 campaign listed the following additional beneficiaries; American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, Council of Jewish Women, Ezras Torah, Hebrew University, Hias, Histadruth, Jewish Welfare Board, Junior Hadassah, Ort, Pioneer Women and Senior Hadassah.

[3]Other members of the committee included Mrs. Samuel Seiger, Harry Potter, Morris Cox, Morris Sacknoff, Charles Cohen, Jules Greenstein, Mrs. Barnett I. Shur, Mrs. Sidney W. Wernick, Harold Bromfield, David Ebenstein, George I. Lewis, Max W. Simonds, Irving Rothstein, Barnett I. Shur and Israel Bernstein.

[4]They were the United Jewish Appeal, Junior Hadassah, Council of Jewish Women, Portland Hebrew School, United Hebrew Charities, Business Girls, Jewish War Veterans, Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith Auxiliary, Y.M.H.A., Portland Zionist District, Degel Zion Camp, Vaad Hoir, Pioneer Women, Poale Zion, Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue and Shaarey Tphiloh Sisterhood.

[5]The following additional organizations were represented at the meeting; Anshe Sfard Sisterhood, Jewish Community Center and Center Women's Club.

[6]They were Philip Abrahamson, Edward J. Berman, Jacob H. Berman, Joseph Brenner, Benjamin Bernstein, Israel Bernstein, Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Harold Bromfield, Dr. David Brownstone, Charles Cox, Morris Cox, Aaron Davidson, Sidney A. Davidson, Molly Finkelman, Hyman Jacobson, Joseph W. Larkin, Abraham S. Levey, Mrs. Myer Levitan, George I. Lewis, Hyman Mersky, Oscar Modes, Samuel Nelson, Mrs. Ada Palmer, Jacob Potter, Jacob E. Rubinsky, Jesse Rosenberg, Irving Rothstein, Morris Sacknoff, Jacob Sapiro, Mrs. Samuel Seiger, Barnett I. Shur, Mrs. Barnett I. Shur, Joseph Shur, Max W. Simonds, Anna Swonkin, Sidney W. Wernick, Nathan Weinman, Joe Wigon, Mrs. Carl Zolov.

[7]The Jewish agencies represented in the War Chest drive by the Jewish Federation were the Jewish Community Center, United Hebrew Charities and Council of Jewish Women Social Welfare Committee.

[8]**Center Bulletin**, Vol. 5, No. 29, March 26, 1943.

CHAPTER XIII

GROWTH OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION

The career of the Jewish Federation has been marked by an increasing extension of its scope of interests and activities. Organized principally as a more efficient instrument for the solicitation and disbursement of funds for philanthropic, cultural and other local organizations, the Federation early recognized that central fund raising and community planning go hand in hand. Because it represented every organization and institution in the community, the Federation was soon able to approach all community problems in a systematic manner.

The role assumed by the Federation in the integration of local social welfare agencies and the supervision of Jewish education will be discussed later. Here we will briefly review its course of development principally in the field of fund raising.

Following the successful campaign in 1943, the Jewish Federation exerted itself to achieve even more impressive results in its second drive. Joseph Wigon, long active in community work and in the Portland Zionist District, was chosen campaign chairman in 1944. The Jewish community, somewhat weakened in manpower through the impact of the war, rallied to meet the ever-increasing demands of its overseas and local agencies. Due to Mr. Wigon's dynamic leadership, the result was an impressive gain. More than $78,000 was raised.

But the demands on Portland Jewry grew from year to year and the Portland community, like others throughout the land, raised its sights toward higher and higher goals.

In 1945 the Federation launched its third annual campaign, directed by George I. Lewis, aiming at a goal slightly over $100,000. With the able assistance of his many co-workers, Mr. Lewis recorded a new high of $120,000. It is interesting to note that when the Jewish Community Center set its fund raising goal at $29,600 only seven years earlier, the amount was then regarded as astronomical. And even in 1943, during the first campaign of the Jewish Federation, it would have required unusual courage to predict that merely two years hence, this new organization could raise $120,000.

At the end of the war in 1945, the American Jewish community girded its loins to face the almost insurmountable problems entailed in the relief and rehabilitation of the remnant of European Jewry. The struggle for Jewish survival in Palestine entered its decisive phase and almost limitless funds were required. The local needs of Jewish communities in America had to be temporarily by-passed; the all-consuming task was the deliverance of European Jewish survivors and support of Jews in Palestine.

The Federation geared itself to meet the overseas emergency. But before embarking on the 1946 drive, it undertook to set its house in order. The constitution and by-laws expressly provided that its member agencies agree "to solicit no funds for current expenses" and "to hold no special finance campaigns or affairs of whatever nature or by whatever name they may be called for capital or other purposes without the approval of the board of directors of this organization."[1] This provision was honored more in the breach than in the observance by some organizations.

Concern about the impact of resurgent multiple appeals on the central campaign led to a demand that Federation's by-laws be clarified and strengthened. In October 1945 Sidney W. Wernick was appointed chairman of a Policy Committee charged with responsibility for "establishing rules and regulations to govern the admission as a constituent agency into the Federation." In January 1946 the Policy Committee reported it had completed its task and submitted a set of rules governing fund raising. This statement underscored more strongly the sections of the original by-laws dealing with fund raising as follows:

> Any attempt or undertaking whatsoever to obtain funds from the people of the city of Portland by any member agency of this Federation, beneficiary or non-beneficiary, by whatever method or for whatever purpose, is improper and is a violation of the principles of the Federation, unless said agency has first procured the permission of the Federation.

These regulations have remained in force. Their effect has been not only to protect the community from multiple appeals, but to encourage an orderly approach to fund raising. They have also established the primacy of the central campaign in the minds of the community.

Strengthened by this step in the direction of further unity, the Federation prepared to meet its increased obligations arising from the needs of the new displaced persons population in Europe.

Under the chairmanship of Louis Bernstein, the community responded magnificently and raised $185,334 in 1946, a gain of fifty percent over the previous year.

Abraham S. Levey, who served as president of the Federation from the start, and concurrently as president of the Vaad Hoir, stepped down from his Federation office in 1946 to make way for an energetic successor, Saul G. Chason. On December 1 of that year a testimonial dinner was held in the Jewish Community Center to express the appreciation of Portland Jewry to Mr. Levey for his leadership and untiring efforts to unify the community. Since that year, Mr. Levey has been honorary president of the Federation.

Both the 1946 and 1947 campaigns were conducted without the services of the Federation's executive director, Norman E. Godfrey.[2] The lack of sustained direction and year-round programming had its effect on Federation's fifth annual drive. Despite the most prodigious effort under the leadership of William Goodman, the 1947 campaign declined to $169,551. In October 1947 Joseph M. Papo assumed his duties as the Federation's first full-time executive director.[3]

The Federation opened its campaign in 1948 under the shadow of world-shaking events. On November 29, 1947 the General Assembly of the United Nations had ratified its plan for the partition of Palestine, allowing for creation of a Jewish commonwealth in the Holy Land. This decision was greeted with threats of doom by the neighboring Arab states. Some fighting already had broken out in Palestine between units of infiltrating Arab irregulars and the troops of the Haganah, the para-military Jewish defense organization.

Early in 1948 the Vaad Leumi, the representative congress of Palestinian Jewry, announced its decision to proclaim the existence of a Jewish state on May 14, 1948, when the British administration of Palestine would expire. War was imminent. Jews of Palestine required staggering sums of money to prepare for this eventuality and to finance the increasing Jewish immigration into the Holy Land.

On May 14, 1948, shortly before the Sabbath, David Ben-Gurion, as provisional premier, proclaimed the State of Israel. Hostilities began and the new state came to grips with the bitter facts of war. Actually, the Arab Legion of Jordan had already begun its invasion two weeks before the birth of the State of Israel, and was being contained before Jerusalem by the superhuman resistance of the Mizrachi settlements centering around Kfar Etzion.

During 1948 Israel Bernstein served as Federation president and once again George I. Lewis took the helm as general campaign chairman. The great need for funds was expressed nowhere more eloquently than in the headlines of the daily newspapers. The heroic resistance of David against Goliath, represented by tiny Israel ranged against seven invading enemy armies, thrilled free peoples of the world. Former skeptics, and even anti-Semites, could not refrain from expressing their admiration for the army and people of Israel. This was a do or die year and the Jews of Portland responded with their most successful effort to date, contributing $292,000 to the Federation campaign.

The heartening result of the 1948 campaign, however, was only part of the struggle. The United Jewish Appeal called upon all Jewish comunities for staggering sums of immediate cash. Portland was urged to turn over to the United Jewish Appeal $194,000, without delay. With most of the contributions still in the form of pledges, the Jewish Federation appealed to the comunity to convert the pledges into cash at once. In a short time, $119,000 was made available to the United Jewish Appeal. The Jewish Federation then negotiated a loan of $75,000 with the Casco Bank and Trust Company.[4] The bank advanced the money free of interest, as its contribution to the cause and in recognition of the Jewish community for making good on its pledges.

In October 1948, Joseph M. Papo resigned as executive director of the Federation to enter private business in California. The Federation engaged Jules Krems as executive director. Mr. Krems arrived in 1948. In addition he is directing, in his professional capacity, the social welfare, educational and historical functions of the Federation.[5]

A valuable technique in the fund raising campaigns of the Federation, first introduced by Mr. Krems in January 1949, was the "C Day Campaign." According to this plan, one day is set aside for the systematic conversion of pledges into cash. With the assistance of devoted workers, the entire community is alerted and mobilized. Each family is canvassed and exhorted to make its contribution in cash. The unusual success of the first "C-Day Campaign" led to its repetition in succeeding years.

In 1949 Sidney W. Wernick succeeded to the presidency of the Federation and Barnett I. Shur served as campaign chairman. A total of $222,000 was contributed, the second greatest fund raising effort in the history of the Jewish Federation.

The 1950 drive, once again under the chairmanship of Barnett I. Shur, realized $201,000.

In order to stem the tide of diminishing funds, the Jewish Federation intensified its efforts to achieve greater community understanding and support for its program. In December 1950 it published the first issue of *Federation Newsletter*, a weekly single page mimeographed digest of significant local, national and overseas developments. Publication continued through May 1952, when budgetary considerations forced suspension.

Federation Newsletter achieved national recognition for itself and the Federation at the 20th General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in December 1951. In competition with more elaborate publications of smaller communities throughout the United States and Canada, it received a certificate of award as the "Best 1951 Community Newspaper".

While campaign receipts in Portland and throughout the country were declining sharply,[6] immigration to Israel was proceeding at an enormous pace. In three short years almost 500,000 newcomers were admitted to the country and additional hundreds of thousands were expected in the near future. Israel's policy of unlimited immigration, criticized severely in many quarters as economically unfeasible, was justified by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion on grounds that (1) Israel was morally obligated to accept every Jew who wanted to migrate to Israel, (2) economically, immigrants were necessary to build the country and (3) immigrants were needed for military security.

The task of resettling, housing, and absorbing the flood of newcomers taxed resources of the infant State to the breaking point.

All this took place at a time when American Jewry was raising less money each year and therefore reducing allocations to the United Jewish Appeal. Emergency action was called for and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion responded by convening in September 1950, the First Jerusalem Economic Conference of American and Israeli leaders. The Four Point Program which emerged from the conference called upon American Jewry to raise one billion dollars for Israel during the next three years. This was to be accomplished through (1) an expanded and strengthened United Jewish Appeal, (2) the launching of the Independence Bond Issue for the State of Israel, (3) intensification of American private investments in Israel and (4) intergovernmental aid.

Thus Portland Jewry, under the co-chairmanship of Abraham S. Levey, George I. Lewis, Harold P. Nelson and Harold J. Potter, undertook to sell Israel bonds in Portland during the years 1951-1954. In this period almost $300,000 worth of bonds were sold,

representing one of the finest records of accomplishment among communities of comparable size. Benjamin Hagai and Lewis Michaelson provided professional direction as field representatives of the American Financial and Development Corporation for Israel.

Saul G. Chason returned to the Federation helm in 1951 and 1952, becoming the first president to serve three terms. Louis E. Weiner then led the 1951 campaign which netted $167,000. In 1952, with Jacob Potter as campaign chairman, the most strenuous efforts yielded only $147,416.

Arthur M. Waterman was elected Federation president in 1953. The downward trend of giving, paralleling national experience, was temporarily halted in that year. Under the leadership of Harold J. Potter, who succeeded his father as campaign chairman, the 1953 fund raising effort produced pledges totalling $151,000. This marked the first time since 1948 that a campaign had raised more than its predecessor.

As a new and colorful feature of the 1953 campaign, the children of both the Portland Hebrew School and the Beth El Hebrew School made special contributions from their own pocket money. Under the leadership of student co-chairmen, Cedric Minkin of the Portland Hebrew School and Bette Krems of the Temple Beth El Hebrew School, the sum of $135 was raised and turned over to the Federation.

The 1954 campaign, chaired by Sidney A. Davidson, continued the downward trend, raising only $131,000. But by then, with the success of the Four Point Program conceived three years earlier in Jerusalem, Israel had made substantial strides toward economic recovery. Its policy of "unlimited immigration" had given way to a policy of "selective immigration." Productive enterprise blossomed, and the gap between imports and exports narrowed.

However, the burden of short-term indebtedness incurred in the process of absorbing 700,000 immigrants during its six years was pressing the State. As a result the United Jewish Appeal undertook in 1954 the sponsorship of a seventy-five million dollar five-year loan. It called upon Jewish communities to borrow seventy-five million dollars from banks to be liquidated over a five-year period. With this money, Israel could immediately repay its short term loans at a saving of seven million dollars annually in interest charges.

Once again the Jewish Federation rose to the occasion. In July 1954, under the leadership of George I. Lewis, a $150,000 loan was negotiated with the Casco Bank and Trust Company and the pro-

ceeds forwarded to the United Jewish Appeal.

In the fall of 1954 the State of Israel also embarked upon a campaign to promote the sale of a second issue of Israel Development Bonds. This resulted from the success of the first effort which produced bond purchases throughout the country in the amount of one hundred and sixty million dollars. The campaign was launched in Portland with a testimonial dinner honoring George I. Lewis in recognition of his services to the previous bond drive. The dinner, held November 9, 1954, was attended by several hundred persons.

How did the Federation's fund-raising efforts compare with drives of Jewish communities of comparable size during the period of world Jewry's most serious crisis? Fortunately we have a basis for comparison in the figures made available to us by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds.[7] Using 1946, American Jewry's first big campaign year, as a base, the report indicates that communities with Jewish populations under five thousand raised forty eight per cent more in 1948 than in 1946 and thirty-nine per cent less in 1954 than in 1946. Portland Jewry's increase in 1948 over 1946 was fifty-seven percent. It raised twenty-nine percent less in 1954 than in 1946. The decline in fund raising since 1948 became a subject of national concern, and many theories were advanced to account for it. These included the declining impact of the overseas appeal, fear about the economic climate in this country, the resurgence of capital and maintenance drives to meet deferred local needs and the impact of multiple appeals.

Decreasing funds created serious budgeting problems. Pressures and dissatisfactions with allocations from local, national and overseas organizations began to mount, and the primacy of the central campaign was threatened. The fears concerning the impact of declining funds on the central campaign were given expression by Jules Krems in his annual report to the Jewish Federation, on December 9, 1954.

> Should the downward trend persist, the results will, I believe, be disastrous for Portland Jewry. Our community must decide for itself whether it wishes to serve the needs of forty beneficiaries through one annual campaign or through forty independent campaigns. To use the vernacular, we can't have our cake and eat it too. If we believe in one campaign, then we must support it adequately.

However, while Portland was preoccupied during the years with

raising money to discharge its worldwide responsibilities, the Jewish Federation did not ignore its planning and coordinating functions. Thus, in November 1947, the Federation authorized a study of the community's Jewish education needs. In September 1948 it established a Social Service Coordinating Committee to analyze the Jewish community's welfare needs and services. And that same month it appointed a committee to study a request by the United Service for New Americans that the Federation assume responsibility for the resettlement of twelve displaced persons units in Portland.

The Federation was, indeed, on the threshold of important expansions in its program which will be discussed in a later chapter.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XIII

[1]By-Laws of the Jewish Federation of Portland, Maine.

[2]Norman E. Godfrey became ill early in 1946 and died on January 24, 1947.

[3]Heretofore the Jewish Community Center's executive director had also administered the program of the Jewish Federation. Now each organizaion had its own full-time director.

[4]The loan was endorsed by the following: Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Lewis Bernstein, George I. Lewis, Benjamin Lewis, Leo Golodetz, James Stein, David Ebenstein and Joseph Wigon. This was the first of many similar advance loans through the years.

[5]Jules Krems received his B.A. degree from Penn State College in 1935 and pursued post-graduate studies for two years at the Graduate School of Jewish Social Work. In 1938 he received the degree of Master of Social Service from New York University.

[6]The Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds notes the decline in federation income throughout the country in millions of dollars as follows: 1948 - 130.0; 1949 - 102.6; 1950 - 88.6; **Analysis and Proposals for Strengthening Fundraising.**

[7]**Analysis and Proposals for Strengthening Fundraising.**

CHAPTER XIV

RELIGIOUS LIFE SINCE 1942

In January 1942 Rabbi Mendel Lewittes accepted a post in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and the Vaad Hoir began to seek a new rabbi. This ordinary, routine affair of any Jewish community served as a ground for protest by a segment of Portland Jewry. True, it was a veiled protest, nonetheless a significant one, in the light of future developments.

The first articulate expression of discontent with the existing state of affairs in religious life was an editorial appearing in the *Center Bulletin* of February 27, 1942. It purported to represent the views of the "younger groups", and as such attempted to explain the indifference of a large segment of the community to the selection of a new rabbi. Since the critique offered in the editorial is significant as a "sign of the times," the entire text is reproduced below:

> The Jewish Community of Portland is in the process of selecting a new Rabbi. Despite the fact that this selection is of importance to all sections of the Jewish population, the attendance at the lectures given by candidates for the position consisted solely of older members of the Community.
>
> It is not enough to view with alarm this lack of interest in the choice of a spiritual leader. There is no doubt that religion is more a part of life of the older folks than it is of the others. But there is more to it than that. Part of the blame for this disinterestedness must be laid to the feeling among the younger groups that the final choice of the Rabbi will be made in any case by the elders and that the Rabbi will be chosen without an adequate consideration or even appreciation of the needs of the younger members of the Community. More is needed in a Rabbi, they feel, than the ability to bring tears to the eyes with impassioned oratory. There may or there may not be any basis for this feeling but the mere fact that it exists indicates that care must be taken to ensure that the Rabbi chosen is qualified to

serve the needs of all age groups. And if the needs of any groups have to be sacrificed, let it not be the youngest, for once the Jewish Community has let the new members slip away, it will be found extremely difficult to effect the revitalization of spiritual feeling. Therefore the ability to attract the interest of high school students and to inspire in them a sympathetic feeling toward the spiritual things in Jewish life is most important.

It is also necessary to have a Rabbi qualified by temperament to deal with the college trained. More is needed than continual attacks upon college students and their secular education. The Jewish youth of Portland will continue to go away to school and unless the Rabbi chosen is of the type to be able to give sympathetic and realistic understanding to their religious and spiritual problems and ideas, this important element of the Community may be further driven away from close association with the Jewish Community.

It is true, then, that the younger elements have little interest in the choice of a new Rabbi. Much can be done to refire this interest if they can be made to feel that the Rabbi is to be chosen with a view to his being their leader as well as the religious leader of the older folks. Only then will the choice of a Rabbi be of any concern to them.

Whether the "elders" gave serious consideration to this critique cannot be determined. At any rate, Rabbi Aaron Greenbaum was selected to succeed Rabbi Lewittes and he arrived in Portland in August 1942. Mrs. Greenbaum was the daughter of the celebrated Rabbi Menachem M. Kasher, author of the encyclopedic *Torah Shlemah*, a compendium of biblical commentaries. Like his predecessor, Rabbi Greenbaum had the responsibility of serving the three Orthodox congregations at a time when a schism among Portland Jewry was gathering momentum. On the one hand, at least half of the Jewish population was residing in the Woodfords section, removed from the former Jewish center. On the other, interest in Orthodoxy was waning among an increasing number of Jews.

The shift of population to Woodfords resulted in a gradual decline in Hebrew school enrollment. Many families, now living in suburbia, refused to allow their children to travel the distance to the Portland Hebrew School. Sensing the critical situation, the Hebrew school opened a makeshift branch at 412 Deering Avenue in 1941. During the next year classes for Woodfords children were

held in the home of Leo Golodetz, conducted by Hyman Norkin of the Hebrew school staff. Sometimes Lipa Bendow, principal of the Hebrew school, engaged in the Woodfords endeavor, often going to several homes throughout the week. Unfortunately, this effort produced no lasting results. In 1941, the total enrollment of the Hebrew school was only one hundred.

Throughout the 1940's, Portland Jewry attempted to come to grips with the new situation in their religious and educational life, occasioned by the dispersal of population.[1]

In an article appearing in the *Center Bulletin*, on October 13, 1944, Rabbi Aaron Greenbaum summed up the situation in the field of Jewish education as follows:

> For the last few years, the state of the Hebrew School has been a source of great irritation and concern. We have been struggling with many difficulties of an inner and outer character. Criticism is rampant. Complaint is on every lip. To date it served, in not a few instances, as a palliative soothing the conscience of parents who did not send their children to school for many other reasons. It also resulted in the deplorable decline of the position of our school in the community.

What some of the complaints were, may be inferred from the new steps contemplated by the Hebrew school, according to Rabbi Greenbaum. These included, renovation of the school building, plans for a Woodfords branch of the school, and acquisition of a bus to facilitate transportation of children from outlying areas. Furthermore, he pointed out, a commission of educational experts would be brought to Portland to analyze the school's program and make further recommendations for improvement.

In November, 1944, Dr. Jacob I. Hartstein, Professor of Education at Yeshiva College in New York City, conducted a survey. In his report, published in the *Center Bulletin*, April 6, 1945, Dr. Hartstein dealt at length with the suggestion of a Woodfords branch, as follows:

> The surveyor feels that the desire for a school in Woodfords to a large degree expresses all-round dissatisfaction with the present school to the point of not even dreaming that a school associated with the old district and the present conditions can possibly be made to embody the best in religious education, which the parents of Woodfords are so solicitous

> of. There are many disadvantages to subdividing a small school. . . Should the findings of the surveyor's studies indicate the advisability of one, rather than two schools, it would become necessary to consider its location and possibility of the school's providing transportation.
> Any Central School, or for that matter even a new sectional school, should be housed in an appropriate school building and properly furnished, and having all the modern appurtenances.

Although the surveyor's report did not encourage establishment of a Woodfords branch, it did underscore the need for a centrally located school building. On the one hand, the surveyor emphasized principally improvement of curriculum and teaching personnel as a solution. At the same time, he implied the need for a building that would be more conveniently located. But the Portland Hebrew School continued to carry on its work on Pearl Street and apparently tabled any plans for a new school in Woodfords.

From the time of his arrival, Rabbi Greenbaum worked vigorously to preserve the strength of Orthodoxy through varied educational activities, some of which are referred to in the following chapter. Nonetheless, the tide against Orthodoxy gained momentum. Finally, in 1947, when Rabbi Greenbaum left Portland, the new force reached a stage of maturity and emerged as a new congregation affiliated with the Conservative movement.

Late in 1947, Rabbi Morris Bekritsky was brought to Portland to serve the Orthodox community. Almost immediately he urged Congregations Etz Chaim and Shaarey Tphiloh to erect an Orthodox synagogue in Woodfords to prevent the inevitable loss of its members to the new, conveniently located Conservative congregation. This project, however, was not seriously considered then, and as a result the Jews in the Woodfords section became increasingly identified with the new Conservative movement.

On July 30, 1947, a mass meeting was held in the Jewish Community Center to consider the feasibility of organizing a Conservative congregation. A week earlier a letter signed by "Committee", had been sent to all Jewish families, announcing the purpose of the gathering and inviting all sympathetic persons. About one hundred men and women attended the meeting and Louis Bernstein acted as chairman. Although there was a favorable response to the idea of a new congregation, not many were willing to assume leadership of the movement.

During the following month, Rabbi Morris Dembowitz, repre-

senting the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, addressed another mass meeting at the Center and outlined the program of the Conservative movement. There was no agreement among the audience on all matters, but a decision was made to proceed with the organization of a Conservative congregation and to hold High Holiday services at Frye Hall. The new group assumed the name Temple Beth El and the following officers were elected: Benjamin Lazarus, president; Harold K. Halpert, vice-president; Irving Stein, treasurer; and Arnold Potter, secretary.[2]

The Temple Beth El Sisterhood was organized on November 22, 1947 with Mrs. Carl Zolov, chairman of the Steering Committee. Mrs. Lewis Bernstein was elected first president in June, 1948. Serving with her were Mrs. Myer Sacknoff, 1st vice-president; Mrs. Benjamin Finn, 2nd vice-president; Mrs. Philip Bornstein, treasurer; Mrs. Maurice B. Kane, recording secretary; and Mrs. Newell Potter, corresponding secretary.[3]

At the first High Holiday services, with no segregation of men and women, Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett officiated as guest rabbi. Shortly thereafter, Temple Beth El rented space at 509 Forest Avenue and held regular Friday evening services, with Alfred Goldman as cantor. Visiting rabbis were sent by the Jewish Theological Seminary until Rabbi Bennett was elected as permanent rabbi. He settled in Portland in August 1948. For the next two years, Temple Beth El was at 520 Forest Avenue, in a building which was granted rent-free by Lewis Bernstein. Meanwhile plans for a permanent temple building were formulated and at a banquet on October 6, 1948, $100,000 was pledged. The ultimate cost of the structure was close to $250,000.

Ground breaking ceremonies for Temple Beth El were held on Sunday, September 11, 1949, and in the fall of 1950, the temple although not yet completed, was opened for the High Holiday Services. It consisted of a synagogue, a social hall, a small chapel and four classrooms in the Hebrew school wing. The Hebrew school had been organized in April 1949, when the board of directors of Temple Beth El voted to establish a three-day-a-week congregational school. Dr. Benjamin Zolov was the first school committee chairman.[3] Sixty children, more than half of them girls, were enrolled for the fall term of 1949. Ernest Braun was engaged as a teacher under the supervision of Rabbi Bennett. In 1950 the enrollment was doubled and Joel Corn was added to the faculty. By the fall of 1953 the Hebrew school had two hundred and five students in five grades and two high school classes. Rabbi Bennett left Portland in March 1953 and was succeeded by Rabbi

Mordecai S. Chertoff.

These rapid forward strides of Temple Beth El challenged the Orthodox movement and Beth El emerged as the second largest congregation. In 1954 it had a membership of about three hundred and twenty-five families, compared with Shaarey Tphiloh's membership of three hundred and fifty. However, many of Shaarey Tphiloh's members also were members of Temple Beth El. Nearly one third of the pupils in Temple Beth El Hebrew School came from families otherwise not affiliated with the Temple. In many cases enrollment of children in Temple Beth El Hebrew School led to the eventual affiliation of their parents with the congregation.

To conserve the strength of the Orthodox community, Rabbi Bekritsky urged formation of an Orthodox Kehillah in 1952. As envisaged in this plan, the three Orthodox synagogues, the Portland Hebrew School and the Vaad Hoir would pool their resources. As a unified, organic community, the Orthodox Kehillah could then undertake new projects efficiently. One proposed project was establishment of an Orthodox synagogue in Woodfords and another was creation of a new Orthodox Hebrew school there. The plan for the Kehillah was still-born, however, for the synagogues did not relish the idea of surrendering their independence.

For Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh this period marked the completion of its first fifty years of existence. In June, 1954 a three-day Golden Jubilee celebration was held under the chairmanship of Arthur M. Waterman. Prominent state and city officials, including Governor Burton M. Cross, participated in the program. A concert presented by the world-renowned Cantor Moshe Kussevitsky and attended by more than one thousand persons, climaxed the Jubilee.[4]

As a separate undertaking for the revival of Orthodoxy, Portland Hebrew School made plans early in 1953 to move to the Woodfords section. Since the rise of Temple Beth El Hebrew School, the enrollment in Portland Hebrew School had steadily diminished. In 1954 less than fifty children were attending the school. In order to counteract this progressive decline, directors of the Portland Hebrew School voted to erect a modern school and synagogue on Noyes Street in the heart of Woodfords and to dispose of the old building. In the spring of 1954, a campaign for $189,000 was initiated under the general chairmanship of Bertram H. Silverman and honorary chairmanship of William Goodman and Abraham S. Levey. Ground breaking ceremonies took place on December 19, 1954 with addresses by Portland City

Council chairman, Ben Wilson, and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Harrison Lyseth. The building is scheduled to be ready for occupancy in the fall of 1955, thus opening a new chapter in the expansion of Judaism in Greater Portland. Establishment of a Portland Hebrew Day School has also enhanced prospects of an Orthodox revival and will be considered briefly in the following chapter. It is too soon to assess accurately the impact that the new Portland Hebrew School will have on the community. It does appear evident, however, that the old Jewish community, geographically speaking, will be but a relic within another decade or two. With the increasing movement of Jews to new sections of the city, signs are already evident that the old synagogues will soon want for regular worshipers.

The future, as we view it now, lies in Woodfords and it is likely that Portland Jewry, both Orthodox and Conservative, will be strongly organized there within a few years. We are now on the threshold of a new era for Portland Jewry.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XIV

[1]The dispersal of population was only one cause of the defection. Another was the inability of a section of Portland Jewry to acclimate itself to the Orthodox pattern, due to lack of Hebraic education or lack of interest in traditional Judaism. Until the early 1940's, for example, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh did not look with favor upon the use of English-Hebrew prayer books. Only through the stubborn insistence of I. Edward Cohen, President of the Congregation in the mid-forties, were bi-lingual **Machzorim** purchased. But this concession did not obviate the impatience of many Jews with long services or their lack of identification with many synagogue practices.

[2]Succeeding presidents of Temple Beth El were James Stein, Edward J. Berman and Edward D. Sacknoff.

The original directors and associate directors of Temple Beth El were Edward J. Berman, Lewis Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Dr. David Berlowitz, Dr. B. James Cohen, David Ebenstein, Mrs. Julius Elowitch, Mrs. Michael Field, Benjamin E. Finn, Mrs. Norman I. Godfrey, Mrs. David J. Lavin, Benjamin Lewis, Mrs. Maurice H. Packet, Jacob H. Potter, Myer H. Sacknoff, Irving E. Small, James Stein, Sidney W. Wernick, Lester M. Willis, Dr. Benjamin Zolov, Carl P. Zolov.

[3]Lewis H. Kriger and Gerald Slosberg succeeded him as chairmen of the school committee.

[4]Daily chairmen and programs were as follows: Jacob Citrin, Reconsecration Sabbath, June 12; Harry Weisberg, Dedication Day, June 13; I. Edward Cohen, Open House, June 14.

CHAPTER XV

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

During World War II, destruction of Jewish communities and cultural strongpoints in Europe produced a reflex action in America, leading to a renewed interest in Jewish history and cultural values. It is one of the ironies of contemporary history that Nazism served as a rejuvenator of Judaism wherever it did not act as its grave-digger. Thus we note, as a result of the deepening European Jewish crisis during the war, a remarkable awakening among American Jews to long-neglected values of their heritage.

In Portland, during the early 1940's, grave was concern expressed over the lagging interest in the Jewish education of children and the lamentable fact that a large section of the young population was receiving no Jewish instruction at all. This was attributed not only to the dispersal of population into sections somewhat removed from the Portland Hebrew School but principally to lack of parental interest.

We have noted that efforts were made by the Portland Hebrew School in the early 1940's to establish a Woodfords branch. With the emergence of Temple Beth El Hebrew School in 1949, the geographical hurdle was overcome and the rapid increase in the student population of the Temple school may be partly attributed to its favorable location.

But education for children was only part of the problem; the increasing need for an organized community program of adult studies made itself felt. To this end, Rabbi Aaron Greenbaum urged formation of a Portland Council of Jewish Education, which came into existence in November 1943. With Dr. Benjamin Zolov as president, the Council prepared a comprehensive program of adult Jewish studies. The Vaad Hoir displayed immediate interest and granted funds to maintain its activities. Among the first projects of the Council were classes in Bible, the history of Zionism, Jewish law, Hebrew language and a Hebrew speaking circle. The last group met twice a week for the study of *Tehillim*, the Book of Psalms. The Council's program continued for three years until it was absorbed by the Jewish Community Center.

In November 1946, the Jewish Community Center sponsored

an Adult Institute, under the direction of Reuben Resnick and J. Lederman of Portland Hebrew School. This institute was continued until the spring of 1949, with classes in Hebrew, Jewish history and related subjects, conducted by the staff of Portland Hebrew School. Rabbi Morris Bekritsky joined the faculty in 1948 and Jack Weinstein and Leon Wengrowsky assisted during the last two semesters. The adult institute program was sponsored during 1949-50 by the Jewish Federation at the request of both the Center and Temple Beth El. Mrs. Casper Sutton headed the planning committee, and more than one-hundred and fifty persons participated.

In 1948 the Jewish Federation set up a Survey Committee, under the chairmanship of Joseph W. Larkin to study the operation of Portland Hebrew School in relation to educational needs of the community. Dr. Alexander S. Kohanski, executive director of the Maine Jewish Council, was engaged to gather and evaluate the pertinent data.

As a prelude to this study, two hundred and twenty-five families, or one-fourth of Portland Jewry, were polled as to the number and ages of their children, their educational background, the school curriculum and the length of schooling desired. A significant revelation of Dr. Kohanski's final report was that more than half of the children in Portland Hebrew School lived in Woodfords, whereas only twenty-three percent lived on Munjoy Hill and in other parts of the city closer to the school.

The organization of Temple Beth El Hebrew School in the fall of 1949 introduced a new element in elementary Jewish education. Since the Kohanski Report dealt with Portland Hebrew School alone, it was rendered inconclusive.

The Jewish Federation was brought into the picture again in November 1949, when Temple Beth El Hebrew School asked for Federation support. In December the Federation's board of directors authorized a new survey of educational needs, to be conducted by a consultant of the American Association for Jewish Education and by representatives of the Orthodox and Conservative movements. Pending completion of the survey, the Federation agreed to support both schools in accordance with their needs.

After several delays, the survey group arrived in March 1950. It consisted of Aharon Kessler of the American Association for Jewish Education, Isador Margolis of the Vaad Hachinuch Hacharedi, and Abraham Millgram of the United Synagogue of America. Previously, the Federation and both schools had agreed to be

bound by the unanimous recommendations of this group and to make every effort to implement them. The final report, containing several unanimous recommendations, was completed in June 1950 and accepted by Federation directors on June 29, 1950.

The first recommendation was that a Bureau of Jewish Education be created, representing both schools and the community-at-large. In the field of elementary Jewish education this agency should establish uniform standards for both schools in matters relating to personnel, curriculum, tuition and hours of study. It was further recommended that the Bureau engage a full-time or part-time educational director.

The surveyor's report also urged establishment in both schools of classes for children from the ages of five to thirteen. For those aged thirteen to fifteen, it recommended creation of a single junior high school department for both schools. In addition to these recommendations for the afternoon schools, the consultants favored a Jewish all-day school. It was recommended that such a school be organized, when feasible, by the Bureau, run as a community school and financed by the community in the same manner as the afternoon schools.

BUREAU OF JEWISH EDUCATION

On June 29, 1950, the directors of the Jewish Federation established a Bureau of Jewish Education of fifteen members, five to be appointed by the Jewish Federation and five from each Hebrew school. The first meeting of the Bureau was held on July 5, 1950 at the Jewish Community Center. Representing the Federation were Harold J. Potter, Edward D. Sacknoff, Myer Marcus, George I. Lewis and Israel Bernstein. The delegates of Temple Beth El were Lewis H. Kriger, Dr. Benjamin Zolov, Harold Halpert, Dr. David Davidson and Benjamin Lazarus. The Portland Hebrew School was represented by Jacob E. Rubinsky, David I. Rubinoff, Abraham Seigal, Jules Greenstein and Saul H. Sheriff.

The Bureau was created as an autonomous agency, and it was agreed that its policies would be guided by the recommendations of the surveyor's report. In the preamble to the Constitution and By-Laws of the Bureau of Jewish Education, adopted shortly after its formation, we read:

> In response to the ever-growing demand for the creation in our community of an effective Jewish educational system to concern itself with all problems of Jewish education, and in the spirit and light of the "Principles and Recom-

mendations of the Surveyors' Report on System of Jewish Education in Portland" presented on June 25, 1950, we, the duly chosen representatives of the Jewish Federation of Portland, the Portland Hebrew School, and Temple Beth El, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution and By-Laws for the Bureau of Jewish Education of Portland, Maine."

The purposes of the Bureau were enumerated as follows:

The promotion of the cause of Jewish education in the community-at-large.
The encouragement of cooperative effort among, and close relationship with, agencies for Jewish education.
The encouragement of community responsibility for Jewish educational endeavor.

At the first meeting, Saul H. Sheriff was elected president; Lewis H. Kriger, vice-president; and Myer Marcus, secretary. After a prolonged discussion of the surveyor's report, the Bureau voted in favor of a minimum of six hours of instruction for the children in both schools during the year 1950-1951. For the following years, pupils of ten to twelve years of age were to receive at least seven and one-half hours of instruction.

After this optimistic start, however, several members reversed their position. At a meeting on August 7, 1950 a vigorous debate on the validity of the survey recommendations resulted in a deadlock and a motion was passed to dissolve the Bureau of Jewish Education. This hasty decision was retracted at a special meeting on August 24, 1950 when the same delegates voted to reconstitute the Bureau and ratified all previous acts.

In the fall of 1950, the Bureau sponsored an Adult Institute of Jewish Studies. Under the direction of Sumner T. Bernstein, a curriculum of wide scope was prepared and presented almost exclusively by laymen. That year marked the peak of adult Jewish education in Portland. During the following year the Orthodox and Conservative groups were unable to work out an acceptable joint approach and the Bureau would not sponsor a program that was not the cooperative effort of both groups. Since 1951, there have been no community wide adult education institutes.

The Bureau functioned for the first six months without the services either of a full or part-time educational director. Its adult institute program succeeded in part because the Jewish

Federation staff lent its assistance. But the Bureau itself was lacking both in administrative direction and in its ability to render a consultative or supervisory service to the staffs of the two Hebrew schools. Financial considerations precluded the possibility of engaging a full-time educational director. The Bureau therefore did the next best thing. It requested the Jewish Federation in December 1950 to make available to it the services of its executive director, Jules Krems, and the Federation's office staff and facilities. The request was granted. Then in the fall of 1951 it engaged A. Hillel Henkin, director of the Bureau of Jewish Education in New Haven, Connecticut, to serve as part-time educational consultant. Henkin continued in this capacity until 1953 when he was succeeded by Elijah Bortniker, a staff member of the Jewish Education Committee of New York City.

With these staff additions the Bureau's program moved forward quickly and gained in stature. Although limited by budget to only four two-day visits a year, the consultants made a significant contribution to advancement of the Jewish educational services of the two Hebrew schools. A high point of the Bureau's program was reached in the Summer of 1954 when it sponsored a two-week teachers' training course for educators throughout Maine. Participants from Lewiston as well as Portland availed themselves of the opportunity of devoting a concentrated period of time to study of the latest pedagogic theories and techniques. The course was presented by Elijah Bortniker and Samuel Steinberg, principal of the Mamaroneck Jewish Center.

The Bureau also established uniform standards on hours of instruction, tuition fees, budgeting and encouraged cooperation between the schools on various projects. It sponsored a taxi transportation service for two years, then abandoned it because of its costliness. It purchased an audio-visual library which is utilized by the two schools.

Lewis Kriger was elected president of the Bureau of Jewish Education in 1951, and re-elected in 1952, being succeeded in 1953 by David I. Rubinoff.

In his annual report for 1951, Mr. Kriger indicated the expansion that had taken place in elementary Jewish education, as follows:

> In 1948, ninety-five children attended the Portland Hebrew School at a cost of $13,600 to the Jewish Federation. In 1949, $17,000 was spent on one hundred twenty-five children attending the Portland Hebrew School and the

Temple Beth El Hebrew School. In 1950, this rose to $24,000 for one hundred eighty-five children. This year, 1951, two hundred thirty-five children are attending the two schools at a cost of about $29,000. Although total costs have risen from $13,000 in 1948 to $29,000 in 1951, per capita costs have dropped from $143 per child to $123 per child.

In 1953 about two hundred and seventy children were enrolled in both schools, the overwhelming majority in Temple Beth El Hebrew School (two hundred and five.) As a result of this disparity, a grave problem arose, for the extrememly high per capita cost of education in Portland Hebrew School threatened that school's future. Therefore, Portland Hebrew School made plans to move to the Woodfords section, where the largest concentration of Jewish families is found. In consequence of this decision, it is likely that a more equitable distribution of Jewish pupils between the two schools will be forthcoming during the next few years.

A new feature on the local educational scene is the Portland Hebrew Day School, under the leadership of Rabbi Morris Bekritsky. As an idea, the Jewish all-day school was one of the oldest dreams of Portland Jewry. More than fifty years ago, Jacob Judelsohn, one of the founders of the old Portland Hebrew School in 1884, urged the creation of a Jewish all-day school as the only solid foundation for a well-educated Jewish community. In the early 1920's, Mark Sulkowitch offered to advance money for such a school if others would join him, but his gallant gesture brought little response. It was felt that the Portland Hebrew School was sufficient for community needs.

On April 2, 1951, Rabbi Bekritsky reminded the Bureau of Jewish Education that the Surveyors' Report called for the organization of a Jewish day school. Rabbi Bennett of Temple Beth El concurred. Both favored a day school, sponsored by the community to accommodate a first grade class in the fall of 1951.

The Bureau appointed a committee to meet with the rabbis, Commissioner Ladd of the State Department of Education and Dr. Lyseth, Superintendent of Schools in Portland.[1]

On May 31, 1951, the committee recommended establishment of a Jewish day school, under the Bureau of Jewish Education, with both rabbis participating in its direction. It reported that fifteen children were ready to enroll in the first grade, and that the initial cost to the Bureau would be $3700. The matter, how-

ever, was tabled. Finally, after a year of inaction on the part of the Bureau, Jacob E. Rubinsky announced that the Orthodox community would establish an independent day school.

In the fall of 1952, the Portland Hebrew Day School began its career with a first grade class of eight children, using facilities of Portland Hebrew School, but functioning as a separate entity without Federation support. Mrs. Benjamin Hagai, a native of Jerusalem, taught Hebrew subjects during the morning period and Mrs. Bernice Lothridge, a former teacher in the Portland public schools, taught English subjects in the afternoon.

In the fall of 1953, the Jewish Day School added a second grade and a sub-primary class and in 1954 a third grade with a total enrollment of twenty-seven in all grades. The school raises funds throughout the state and relies on gifts, scholarships and tuition income.

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

The lead taken by the Jewish Federation in effecting a coordination of activities in elementary Jewish education was soon followed by a similar effort in the field of Jewish social service.

On June 19, 1948, the United States Senate concurred with the House of Representatives in passing the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, calling for the admission to this country of 205,000 displaced persons and refugees during a two-year period. Although President Truman described the measure as "flagrantly discriminatory" he nevertheless signed the bill a few days later in order to avoid further delays. The first contingent of homeless Europeans admitted under the new law arrived in New York on October 30, 1948.

Prior to this period, social welfare activities in the Jewish community of Portland were the separate concerns of the United Hebrew Charities and the Social Welfare Committee of the Council of Jewish Women. Because of the new responsibility for refugee settlement, the need for a central coordinating welfare agency became pressing. Thus, on September 22, 1948, the Jewish Federation appointed a Social Service Coordinating Committee representing the United Hebrew Charities, the Council of Jewish Women, the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Home for Aged and the Jewish Federation.[2]

The need for an organized community approach to the complex problems of resettlement was underscored by Mrs. Louis Black speaking for the Council of Jewish Women. She recognized that the Council was unable to undertake the task of resettlement

which involved guarantees of employment and housing. There was a real need, she said, for a professional organization, with special committees dealing with housing, employment, medical and hospital problems, and an experienced social worker to assume responsibility for organizing and implementing the program.

When Sidney W. Wernick announced the appointment in October 1948 of Jules Krems, an experienced social worker, as executive director of the Federation, Mrs. Israel Bernstein reported that the Social Service Coordinating Committee could at last come to grips with its problems.

In the meantime, the Jewish Federation set up a Refugee Resettlement Committee, headed by Mrs. Barnett I. Shur and Mrs. Louis Black, to devise procedural policy for handling cases of displaced persons. The committee recommended on January 9, 1949 that the Federation assume responsibility for settling twelve refugee families a year, and allocate a minimum of $10,000 to finance the program. Directors of the Jewish Federation accepted these proposals and delegated responsibility to the Refugee Resettlement Committee.

Proceeding with its work, the committee notified the United Service for New Americans concerning its program and offered the necessary job and housing assurances. To assist the committee in implementing the new program, the Federation authorized Jules Krems to serve as case worker.

The minutes of the Federation meeting of February 19, 1949, record that "it was made clear that the Federation is being requested to extend its services to a new area of social planning, that is, case work to individuals and families .... It was therefore recognized that the request was being made because there is no agency in the community, including the Council of Jewish Women and the United Hebrew Charities, capable of providing such service to the community at this time."

During 1949 the Council of Jewish Women and the United Hebrew Charities continued to serve local families. However, on numerous occasions they turned to Mr. Krems for guidance and assistance. Toward the end of 1949, the first refugee units were settled in Portland with the assistance of the Refugee Resettlement Committee and Council of Jewish Women.

The need for closer cooperation between the several agencies was becoming more urgent and the Social Service Coordinating Committee reported a greater desire on the part of the interested agencies for a unified community approach to social welfare. In this connection, Mrs. Israel Bernstein insisted that better results

were being achieved through a professional service at a noticeable financial saving. Above all, she reported, a professionally directed program was geared to rehabilitation rather then to relief alone.

By March 1950, ten displaced persons units had already been settled in Portland and financial assistance and other services had been extended to six non-sponsored units. The Case Work Committee, under Mrs. Lester M. Willis, worked directly with the Federation's executive director and served as a policy formulating group.

Later in 1950, the Social Service Coordinating Committee explored the general problem of social work in the Jewish community to determine whether the present service could be improved. The result was a unanimous decision on the part of the separate social service groups to form a single over-all social service agency. On December 20, 1950, Federation directors approved formation of an over-all Jewish service agency, to be called the Jewish Family Services. This agency was to be autonomous but the Federation agreed to make available to it the services of its executive director who would administer the program of the agency. In addition, the clerical staff and other facilities of the Federation would be put at the disposal of the Jewish Family Services. The aims of the new agency were declared to be:

> To provide a skilled social service to Jewish families and individuals in need of financial assistance and counselling service.
>
> To bring together under a single and efficient administration the variety of services to families and individuals now being rendered by the Jewish Federation, the United Hebrew Charities and the Council of Jewish Women.
>
> To represent the Jewish community in welfare planning councils on the local, state and national level.

Then on February 15, 1951, Mrs. Israel Bernstein, active in welfare work in Portland for nearly thirty years, was elected president of the new agency. Elected with her were Jacob E. Rubinsky, first vice-president; Mrs. Ben Troen, second vice-president; Mrs. Aaron Blumenthal, secretary; and Leo Golodetz, treasurer. Jules Krems assumed the duties of executive director of the Jewish Family Services.[3]

The ambitious program of the Jewish Family Services was implemented through an extensive network of service committees. The Refugee Service Committee under the direction of Mrs. Bar-

nett I. Shur assumed responsibility for the more than sixty-five displaced persons who had come to Portland. In this connection, many of the practical problems entailed in the work of resettlement were solved by the Case Work Committee, headed by Mrs. Lester M. Willis.

The maintenance of Portland's transient shelter and program became the responsibility of the Transient Committee, directed by Myer Lerman. A Medical Committee arranged for professional services to those in need and mobilized medical personnel under the leadership of Drs. Gisela Davidson, Benjamin Zolov and Henry Pollard. The Free Loan Committee, headed by Jacob E. Rubinsky, carried on the tradition of the old Gemileth Chasodim under Jewish Family Services auspices.

A trust fund, called the Hebrew Free Loan Fund, embodying assets of the United Hebrew Charities and Free Loan Association was established. The fund, administered by the Free Loan Committee, makes available interest-free loans up to five hundred dollars to deserving applicants.

Special attention should be directed to the Volunteer Committee, headed by Mrs. Aaron Blumenthal, which coordinated activities of the Jewish Family Services and other groups, in the areas of refugee service, citizenship and English instruction. In this connection, the Council of Jewish Women proved to be a reservoir of volunteer workers, sparked by its Committee on Service to the Foreign-Born, directed by Mrs. Harry Geller and Mrs. Ben Troen.

This bare recital of facts, unfortunately, omits many individuals whose devotion and energy made possible the realization of the aims of the Jewish Family Services. One such devoted worker was the late Leo Golodetz who was active for many years in the United Hebrew Charities. Until his untimely death in 1952, Leo Golodetz was chairman of the Employment Committee of the Jewish Family Services. It was to his credit, and the credit of the agency he represented, that employment was found for more than sixty persons applying through the Jewish Family Services, without recourse to the Maine Employment and Security Commission. The committee also assisted applicants, principally displaced persons, in acquiring further training and new skills, in order to adjust themselves more satisfactorily to their new environment.

Supplementing its work in the Jewish community, the Jewish Family Services is active on the Portland Council of Social Agencies. It cooperates with other organizations in dealing with wider

community problems, such as care of dependent children, adequate housing and slum clearance, and the provision of day nurseries for children of working mothers. Two of its directors, Mrs. Lester M. Willis and Dr. Henry Pollard served as chairmen of the Council's Case Work Division and Health Division.

Viewed as adjuncts of the Jewish Federation, both the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Jewish Family Services have enhanced the stature of the Federation, in addition to bringing the benefits of efficient organization to their respective fields.

There are few Jewish communities of Portland's size that can boast of a Jewish Federation with such comprehensive and highly specialized agencies.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XV

[1]The committee consisted of David I. Rubinoff, chairman; Jacob Rubinsky, Benjamin Lazarus and Lewis H. Kriger.

[2]The Committee consisted of Mrs. Israel Bernstein, chairman; William Goodman, Irving Rothstein, Myer Karlin, Silas Jacobson, Harold J. Potter, Rabbi Morris Bekritsky, Rabbi Ephraim Bennett, Mrs. Lester M. Willis, Mrs. Frank Laben, Mrs. Harold P. Nelson, Mrs. Ben Troen, Mrs. Barnett I. Shur and Joseph W. Larkin.

[3]Original directors were Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Mrs. Aaron Blumenthal, Mrs. Saul G. Chason, Mrs. Samuel J. Cohen, Dr. Gisele Davidson, Mrs. Harry Geller, Leo Golodetz, William Goodman, Myer Karlin, Mrs. Samuel Kates, Myer Lerman, George I. Lewis, Dr. Saul Polisner, Dr. Henry Pollard, Philip Reuben, Mrs. Ralph Ross, Irving Rothstein, David I. Rubinoff, Jacob Rubinsky, Jacob Sapiro, Abraham Seigal, Samuel J. Shatz, Mrs. Barnett I. Shur, Mrs. Oscar Tabachnick, Mrs. Ben Troen, Mrs. Lester M. Willis, Sidney W. Wernick and Dr. Benjamin Zolov.

CHAPTER XVI

JEWS IN PUBLIC LIFE SINCE 1924[1]

Since the early 1920's, the Jewish community of Portland grew not only in numbers but in civic importance, due to the increasing participation of its members in the professions and in civic projects. At the same time, the community's social status was enhanced by the improvement of its economic position. The gradually increasing prosperity of Jewish people provided not only a solid foundation for Jewish community development but also was the occasion for a greater responsibility toward the general community of Portland.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Until the adoption of the city manager form of government in 1923, several Jews had served on the Common Council and the Board of Aldermen. As pointed out previously, this was made possible through election of members by wards and the concentration of Jews in Ward 3. The new city charter abolished ward voting limitations in favor of a city-wide balloting system. Thus the large concentration of Jews in one section of the city did not constitute a political advantage to them.

Despite the absence of Jews from the City Council, many Jewish citizens continued to serve in important posts on the city, state and national levels. Jacob H. Berman became County Attorney in 1916 and served as a United States Commissioner for Maine from 1925 to 1929. Max L. Pinansky, a native of Boston who settled in Portland in 1913, was Judge of the Municipal Court from 1927 to 1931, and a member of the School Board in 1932. Pinansky was elected to the State Senate in 1934, where he served on the Commerce, Education and Legal Affairs committees.

As a result of the Democratic victory in Portland, Silas Jacobson and Udell Bramson were elected to the Maine House of Representatives from 1935 to 1937. Louis Bernstein served on the Portland Civil Service Commission from 1934 to 1941. During this period Albert Abrahamson entered upon his long career of government service.

Born in Portland in 1905, Albert Abrahamson, the son of Laz-

arus and Rose Abrahamson was graduated from Bowdoin College in 1926 and, after studies at Columbia University, was appointed economics instructor at Bowdoin College in 1928. In 1934 he went to Washington D. C. as an economist for the President's Cabinet Committee on Price Policy, then returned to serve as W.P.A. Administrator for Maine from 1935 to 1937.

After serving as executive director of the National Refugee Service in New York City from 1941 to 1943, he went into military service and was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services, better known as the O.S.S. Because of his special background and experience, he was discharged from the army in 1944 and appointed assistant executive director of the War Refugee Board in Washington. In 1945, he was appointed special assistant to the United States Secretary of Labor, and in 1951 served as a consultant to Stuart Symington, who was then head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

It is worth noting that during this long period of public service, Albert Abrahamson was still on the faculty of Bowdoin College, becoming assistant professor of economics in 1930, associate professor in 1936 and full professor in 1947. In addition to his government service, Professor Abrahamson has been a consultant to several national Jewish agencies. Recently, in 1954, he was economic consultant to the Israel Study Mission sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal. This group consisted of American business and professional leaders who spent six weeks in Israel, Europe and North Africa, studying Jewish needs.

On the Portland scene, Barnett I. Shur and Louis Bernstein, prominent attorneys long active in Jewish communal affairs, have held high positions. Since 1946, Shur has served as city corporation counsel for Portland. Louis Bernstein, a major in the United States Air Corps from 1941 to 1945, was appointed Recorder of the Municipal Court in 1948 and Judge of the same court in 1952. The promising career of another Portland Jew, Abraham Breitbard, was brought to a premature end by his death in 1947. From 1943 until his death, Breitbard was a deputy attorney general of the State of Maine.

Among the young Jewish attorneys who have served in public office are Morris Cox, Oscar Cox, Jules Greenstein and Saul Sheriff. Morris Cox, also active in Jewish communal affairs, was appointed clerk of the United States District Court for the District of Maine in 1948. His brother, Oscar Cox, served as corporation counsel for the city of New York until 1940, when he went to Washington, D. C. as assistant to the general counsel in the

Treasury Department. From there he went to the Lend-Lease Administration and was co-author of the Lend-Lease Bill, enacted into law in January, 1941. Among other federal government positions held by Oscar Cox were general counsel in the Office of Emergency Management, assistant solicitor general, general counsel and later deputy administrator for the Foreign Economic Administration, and administrative legal assistant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[2]

Jules Greenstein was appointed to the State Boxing Commission in 1947 and has served as its Chairman since 1950. Saul Sheriff was chairman of the Maine State Liquor Commission in 1952 and 1953. In 1954, Sheriff was appointed to the Maine Port Authority. In the same year Arthur M. Waterman, a prominent automobile dealer, was designated chairman of the Maine State Motor Vehicle Dealers Board.

PROFESSIONS

In 1900, Portland Jewry was still principally an immigrant community. However, children of the earlier immigrants were beginning to partake of advantages their fathers did not have in their land of origin. One of these was higher general education.

Due to the relative poverty among Jews in the early period, only a few persons were able to take advantage of the opportunities for higher education. Many young Jewish boys did not even attend secondary schools regularly.

The first Portland Jew to be graduated from college was John L. Davis. Born in Portland in 1884, the son of the late Israel and Rose Davis, he attended Portland High School and in 1906 received his M.D. degree from the Bowdoin College Medical School of Maine. He was Portland's first Jewish doctor and served as city physician in 1908 and medical inspector for Portland schools from 1910 to 1914.

The second Jewish physician was Dr. Elias Caplan who came from Des Moines, Iowa in 1911 and practiced medicine here until his retirement in the 1940's when he moved to California. Shortly after Dr. Caplan's arrival, Drs. William Deixel and Jacob Melnick opened offices.

William S. Wolf, the son of Joseph H. Wolf, was the first Jewish registered pharmacist in Portland, about the year 1906.

The first Jewish dentists, Drs. Cyrus Briggs and George Goldberg began their practice in 1916.

There were only these few doctors in Portland when Dr. Harry E. Davis, a brother of John L. Davis, began his practice of medi-

cine in 1921. He has been in charge of the Health Clinic in Portland for nearly thirty-three years.

The number of Jewish physicians began to grow in the 1930's and 1940's. One of Portland's native sons, Dr. Benjamin Zolov, served as a surgeon of the United States Public Health Service, from 1943 to 1945, and at present is City Physician.

Only a few Portland Jews entered the field of public education in Maine. Professor Albert Abrahamson already has been mentioned. His educational activity has been on the college level and outside of Portland. In Portland schools, it appears that Edith Briggs Myers was the earliest Jewish teacher, beginning her career in 1919. Samuel C. Rosenthal, who teaches chemistry in Portland High School, entered the profession in 1921. The first Jewish principal in Portland is Philip Gerber of the Jackson Elementary School. Lewis H. Kriger served as an educator for many years, although outside of Portland. He first taught in Fryeburg Academy in 1916. The following year he went to Fort Fairfield, where he served as principal and athletic coach of the Fort Fairfield High School until 1946.

At this point in our record of Jews in public life, we mention the few Portland Jews who have served in leading positions in general veterans organizations, for they require a special category of their own. Philip Resnick and Solomon Crasnick served as commanders of the Harold T. Andrews Post, American Legion. Solomon Crasnick also served for fourteen years as state department service officer of the American Legion. Harold A. Myers was vice-commander of the Ralph D. Caldwell Post, American Legion, at the time of his death in 1934. Finally, Philip Gold served as a commander of the Portland Chapter, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In another separate category we mention Hiram Abrams, active in the entertainment business in Maine, who became nationally prominent. He was born in Portland in 1878, the son of Isaac Abrams, and operated several theaters in Portland and other parts of New England before going to Hollywood. There he was one of the founders of the Paramount Pictures Corporation and served as its second president. In 1919, he founded and organized the United Artists Corporation and became its first president, holding that position until his death in 1926.

Another pioneer in the theatrical field in Portland was Abraham Goodside, brother-in-law of Hiram Abrams, who opened the Empire and Strand theaters.

CIVIC WELFARE

Since the first World War, Jews of Portland have been active in all organizations for general civic improvement and community advancement. Among those who have served as directors of the Portland Community Chest are Mrs. Edward J. Berman, Israel Bernstein, Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Barnett I. Shur, Sidney W. Wernick and Sumner T. Bernstein. On the Executive Committee of the Council of Social Agencies have been Mrs. Israel Bernstein, Louis Bernstein, Mrs. Sumner T. Bernstein, Norman I. Godfrey, Dr. Henry Pollard, Mrs. Jesse Rosenberg, Barnett I. Shur, Mrs. Caspar Sutton, Victor H. Taylor and Mrs. Lester M. Willis.

In 1952, Judge Louis Bernstein served as general chairman of the successful Portland Community Chest campaign, the only Jew ever to serve in that capacity.

Several Jews have been active over the years in organizations such as the Red Cross, the Chamber of Comerce, the Better Business Bureau and the Maine Medical Center. Abraham S. Levey has been a director or trustee in each of these organizations. Israel Bernstein is past president of Pine Tree Council, Boy Scouts of America, and Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn served two terms, beginning in 1951, as president of the Camp Fire Girls, Hitinowa Council of Portland.

JEWISH INTEGRATION IN PORTLAND'S ECONOMIC LIFE

From the beginning of the Jewish community in the 1860's until the turn of the century, the Jews, economically speaking, were a fringe community. They earned a livelihood as peddlers, small shopkeepers, or junk dealers. Most of them eked out a bare existence and hardly made an impact on the business life. A few persons became established in more stable businesses, mainly in clothing and dry goods, and were regarded as the "rich men" of the community.

With the beginning of the present century, Jewish business enterprise grew. New undertakings were launched and smaller business expanded. Around 1900 the American Clothing Company was already doing business on Middle Street, owned and operated by Louis and Bernard Kamber. The Kamber brothers set a new pattern for their time, advertising extensively in newspapers, pamphlets and billboard displays throughout the state. These pioneer efforts in large-scale advertising soon encouraged other business establishments to follow suit. The Kamber business grew rapidly and branch stores were later opened in Bath, Lewiston

and Waterville, Maine, as well as in Springfield, Massachusetts, Hartford, Connecticut, and New York City.

The first Jewish manufacturing company opened on Middle Street about 1906. It was managed by Morris Maiman who came from New York City with his crew of workers and settled here. His enterprise was known as the Coronet Shirtwaist Manufacturing Company. In later years, Elder and Maurice Markson built up an extensive clothing business by introducing what was then considered an unusual innovation – credit purchasing. The purchasing of furniture on credit was introduced by the Hub Furniture Company, established by Samuel Novick and Max W. Simonds in 1914. They were followed in this practice by Harry Potter, Jacob Potter, Abraham S. Levey, Samuel Davis, and Benjamin Goldberg. These pioneers in the credit business thus introduced a new technique in Portland's economic life which has enabled many other enterprises to expand their volume of business and increase the wealth of the city and state.

We have indicated here only some of the Jewish pioneers. Since the 1920's the economic status of the Jewish community has improved rapidly and at present Jews are engaged in nearly all business pursuits and have achieved prominence in many. It is beyond the scope of this section to furnish a directory of Jewish entrepreneurship in Portland. It is apparent that a fringe community has been transformed into a most essential element of the city. And with this ever-increasing expansion and success of Jewish business enterprise has come not only improved economic status but a more eager and responsible participation in the life of the general community.

SPORTS

Until the early 1900's, few Jews attended the higher schools and there was little opportunity for them to participate in the athletic activities sponsored principally by schools. Until 1907, no Portland Jew was known to have played on any high school team. However, in 1906, an all-Jewish football team called the "Trojans" was organized and played with distinction against local and out-of-town teams. In 1907, the "Trojans" played an undefeated season,[3] and the following year the team was augmented by younger replacements, the "Trojan Juniors." However, when many of the players joined school teams, the "Trojans" disbanded.

The Jewish boys who congregated around Franklin and Middle Streets, in the heart of the Jewish district, organized a baseball team that played under the name of W. A. Flaherty's Drug Store,

the headquarters of the neighborhood youth.

From 1907 until the end of the First World War, several local Jews distinguished themselves in high school and college sports. At the beginning of this period, eight Jewish boys and girls were attending Portland High School. Football and baseball, so characteristic of the American environment, had remained the exclusive monopoly of the non-Jewish students until Herman O. Goffin and Lewis H. Kriger qualified for the Portland team.

Herman O. Goffin played football for Portland High School in 1907 and later qualified for track and baseball. He continued his athletic career at Westbrook Seminary, Coburn Classical Institute and Colby College.

Lewis H. Kriger played football for Portland High School from 1908 to 1912, and during the latter two years he made the baseball team. Kriger continued in sports for four years at the University of Maine, where he was the first Jew to qualify for a varsity athletic team.

In 1910 Cyrus K. Briggs became the first Jew to make the basketball team in Portland High School.[4] Somewhat later, William R. Needleman played football, baseball and basketball at Portland High School, and qualified in the same sports at Bowdoin College where he served as baseball captain in his senior year, 1922.

Lewis H. Kriger and William R. Needleman also succeeded in making the grade on local baseball teams, such as the Portland Independents and Scribner's Independents. Soon more Jews began to participate in athletic activities. Among other earlier stars were Mose Rudman, David Needleman and Lewis Abramson. Rudman played football for Portland High School, the University of Maine and Harvard College. Later, in Portland, he became the first football coach of Portland's Cheverus High School, a Catholic school.

After the first World War, greater numbers of Jews began attending Portland High School. This increase in attendance was accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of Jewish athletic stars, of whom only the most outstanding can be mentioned here.

From 1925 through 1928, David Diamon was a four-letter man at Portland High School for one year, and a three-letter man for three years. His sports were football, basketball and tennis, and in his final year he served as captain of the football team.

For three years, 1925 through 1927, Robert Agger was a three-letter man at Portland High School, in football, baseball and

basketball. He was captain of the basketball team in 1927. In that year, Louis Seigal managed the basketball team and Julius Elowitch starred in baseball and track. The following year Elowitch became a three-letter man, when he qualified for football.

Many other Jews at Portland High School qualified for one or more teams during this period, the high water mark for Jewish participation in established sports in Portland. During the early 1920's Jewish boys dominated athletic teams at the Portland Boys Club, which year after year competed successfully with the best clubs in Maine. Philip Erlick won the first marathon race sponsored by the club in 1923. Among other Jewish stars of the Portland Boys Club during this period were Jules and Fido Brownstone, Jack and Teddy Goldstein, Maurice "Murphy" Gerber, Harry and Sam Modes and Barnett I. Shur.

Starring in other activities were Harold Beckelman and Saul Gerber, city golf champions, George Bress, state handball champion, and Nathan Cohen, state checkers champion.

A few Jewish girls also starred in high school sports during the 1920's. Edith Finn was the first to participate in regular sports, qualifying for the Portland High School basketball team. Jane Kodis played basketball for the same school in 1925-1926, and Anna Katz, Ethel Levine and Edith Greenstein also made the team during this period.

The growing participation of Jews in sports from the first decade of the present century to the end of the 1920's coincided with the period of rapid adjustment of the Jews in Portland to the larger community. Participation in sports assumed the character of a mode of adaptation and succeeded in achieving community recognition and a greater confidence on the part of Jews in themselves.

Among the young Jewish athletes of the succeeding period were David Astor, who played football for Portland High School and the University of Maine, and Sumner Gordon, who starred in basketball in Deering High School and later in football and golf at the University of Maine. Donald Herman, an outstanding tennis star at Portland High School, won the city championship.

An interesting sidelight on Jewish activity in sports is the absence of Jewish boxers from the local ring after the first decade of the present century. In the early 1900's a few did engage in professional boxing. Among them were "Scotty" Cohen (Harry Waterman), "Cyclone Zip" (Harry Carvel), Abe Nathanson, known professionally as Jimmy Pearl, and Jimmy "Kid" Rice, who was a contender for the lightweight crown.

REFERENCES IN CHAPTER XVI

[1]In this chapter we will continue the story of Jews in public life begun in Chapter VIII. Here we will call attention not only to individuals who held political office but to men who were prominent in economic life and the professions. In the latter category we will refer only to those who were pioneers in their field or who served professionally in a public office.

[2]Morris and Oscar Cox are the sons of Sarah and the late Jacob Cox.

[3]Members of the "Trojans" included Hyman Berenson, William Goodman, David Blumenthal, Harry Sacknoff, David Rosen, Abraham Goffin, Harry Cohen, Benjamin Levi, Herman Goffin, David Kriger and Harry Blumenthal. Herman Sivovlos was manager.

[4]In later years, Cyrus K. Briggs was active in soft ball. He organized the Soft Ball Association of Portland in 1933, and the State Soft Ball Association in 1935. Since 1945 he has served as State Commissioner of Soft Ball.

[5]Among the others were Bernard Abrams, H. Beckelman, Mitchell Bernstein, Saul Brenerman, Mitchell Cope, Benjamin Cox, Abraham Elowitch, Philip Erlick, Harry Finkelman, Henry Finks, Jack Finn, Harry Garon, Maurice Gerber, Morris Glovsky, Morris Greenberg, Sidney Greenberg, Carl Kopel, Sidney Levine, Sidney Miller, Eber Resnick, Robert Rosenberg, Jacob Rubinoff, David Schwartz, Hyman Shepard, David Shulman, Sam Shible, Bertram Silverman, William Silverman and Henry Troubh.

CHAPTER XVII

IN RETROSPECT

Having concluded our cursory survey of the rise of the Jewish community in Portland, Maine, we are now in a position to evaluate the course of its development, and to highlight those factors that have figured prominently. We will also indicate the most glaring lacunae and those problems which should engage the attention of future investigators.

From our present perspective, it may be unlikely that significant quantities of additional source material will be forthcoming in the near future, dealing with the prehistory and the early decades of the Jewish community. It appears that little attention was given to the preparation or preservation of records of early Jewish experiences. The only significant additions which may be expected are kernels of fact and details that can be culled from official public records, newspapers and other non-Jewish literary material. Unfortunately, limitations of time did not permit an exhaustive study of these sources.

It has been the author's conviction that for the period covering the last fifty years, the historians who follow him can expect to accumulate more significant quantities of source materials than he has had at his disposal. Several came to his attention after the preceeding chapters had been written. They have not affected the general structure of fact that has been outlined in this study, but these and future finds may enable us to throw more light on obscure issues and personalities. At any rate, the preparation of this preliminary study will have proved worthwhile if it can spur not only individual students, but the community as a whole, to renewed efforts to uncover its old sources and preserve them for posterity.

Little information is at present available on Jewish life in Portland prior to the 1860's, and it may be safely assumed that although individual Jews may have lived here previously, no organized Jewish community had been founded. The Jewish community of Portland, to the best of our knowledge, was formed after the Civil War.

From all indications, the growth of the Jewish population pro-

ceeded at an accelerated rate until the end of the first decade of the present century. At the time the population increase slackened somewhat in pace, and continued to fall off gradually until the late 1930's. During the last ten years, the Jewish population increased more rapidly due in great measure to the influx of Jews from other parts of New England and New York.

Almost from the start, Portland Jewry exhibited a homogeneity in social and geographical origins. With rare exceptions, all the earlier immigrants came from the Russian Empire. The few exceptions were German Jews, but Jews from the Austrian Empire, principally the territory of Galicia, who figured prominently in the waves of immigration from 1890 to 1910, hardly appeared in Portland. Thus, until the present day, the Portland Jewish community is essentially composed of descendants of Polish and Lithuanian Jews.

We have already noted that the first permanent Jewish settlements in Maine were in Bangor and Lewiston, the latter almost contemporary with the founding of the Portland community. Yet the rapid growth of Portland's community soon outstripped the other settlements and by the turn of the century Portland was securely in the lead.

Relations between Portland and its sister communities were strengthened by marital ties between families in the several towns. During the last three decades of the 19th century, the Jewish population of Maine was not too stable. With a high percentage of peddlers, a noticeable "floating" element existed. Jews from Portland would often travel throughout the state, settling for varying periods in Bangor, Lewiston, Waterville, Biddeford and Rockland. And there arose corresponding movements of Jews from these towns to others. In some cases, the temporary residence led to permanent settlement, accounting for the high degree of family relationship between the populations of several Jewish communities. Although during the last half century the transfer of population has been less fluid, this phenomenon still occurs, albeit in lesser degree. The unusual homogeneity in origins and tradition may account for the fact that the emergence of non-orthodox religious congregations in Maine has, to date, been a rare phenomenon. In Portland, the new pattern appeared for the first time during World War I, but was short-lived. This interest in a departure from Orthodoxy was exhibited by men who were reared in the Orthodox tradition of Portland, but found it unsatisfactory.

It is significant that the collapse of this movement coincided

with the founding of a new synagogue, Etz Chaim. Many of the adherents of innovation became active in Congregation Etz Chaim and, perhaps through their influence, a concession was made to modernism in the person of an English-speaking preacher, Rabbi Israeli. But the effort of Rabbi Israeli to bring Etz Chaim into the United Synagogue of America was not successful, and this congregation remained Orthodox in spirit, practice and affiliation.

With the advantage of hindsight, we can perceive that the rise of Temple Beth El was not fortuitous. It had a tradition of at least thirty years in the defunct Modern Synagogue Society, whose demise did not extinguish the desire for a change. Throughout this period, in Congregation Etz Chaim a small but vocal group continued to insist on the abolition of the separation of sexes during worship, but with little success. This was one of the motives for the eventual founding of the Conservative congregation. However, we must not overlook the fact that, during the 1940's, a large number of Jews from other parts of New England and New York settled in Portland. They brought with them their own traditions. They had lived in towns where non-Orthodox religious groups had flourished, and with which many of them had been affiliated. It was this new element in the population which produced a qualitative difference in the religious situation, and made the movement for innovation more effective than it had been in the days of the Modern Synagogue Society.

But the formation of Congregation Beth El did not remove the problem of innovation from the ranks of Orthodoxy. In one sense, it aggravated the situation, for pressure is now being exerted on the Orthodox synagogues to modify their practices in respect to mixed seating, prayers in English and the length of the prayer service. The rapid growth of Temple Beth El has influenced some of the younger Orthodox leaders to attribute its success to the appeal of family pews as opposed to separation of the sexes. In one Orthodox congregation, at least, the lines have been drawn almost evenly between advocates of one or the other position. In the meantime, Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh has been host to a Bas Mitzvah ceremony, a confirmation for girls, hitherto unknown in Portland's Orthodox tradition. And English responses are becoming an established part of the High Holiday services in Orthodox synagogues.

Viewed from a wider perspective, the Conservative and Orthodox movements appear to be principally the products of "geographical" influence. The oldest Jewish residential district was in the area of Middle Street, from Pearl to Hampshire Streets. From

this center, Jewish families moved gradually to the Munjoy Hill section and to the other side of Congress Street, then edging closer and closer to Woodfords. Until twenty years ago, not many Jews lived in Woodfords or Deering. This pattern has now been transformed. During the past generation, principally the last decade, Woodfords and Deering have witnessed a wholesale Jewish immigration. The point was reached where at least half the Jewish population was far removed from the old center of life, with its institutions. There was plainly a need for new institutions, synagogues and Hebrew schools in Woodfords to serve the religious needs of the sub-community. When Congregation Beth El established itself in the sector, its success was guaranteed. And conversely, the decline of Orthodoxy in Portland can be attributed, in no small measure, to the isolation of its institutions from the "Main Street" of Jewish life.

It appears that the Orthodox forces have become aware of the "geographical" influence, and plans have been made to establish Orthodox institutions in Woodfords. The new Portland Hebrew School, which will also accomodate Portland Hebrew Day School, is expected to be ready for use in 1955. It will be built with an adjoining synagogue.

In the meantime, the number of Jews moving to Woodfords from older sections is increasing. It is now apparent that a new chapter in Jewish life in Portland is under way.

Although our study has been confined to the internal development of the Portland Jewish community, we must not overlook the fact that Portland Jewry did not evolve in a vacuum. However, it would have greatly complicated our study had we attempted to treat in detail of the relations of Portland with Maine Jewry, as a whole, or with other Jewish communities in New England. Yet we feel that a brief reference to the Maine Jewish Council and its predecessor, the Maine Jewish Committee, is in order. For this institution, although inactive at present, was the first great effort to unite the Jewish communities of Maine, and may well be revived.

The Maine Jewish Committee was formed in 1938 by Israel Bernstein and Joseph W. Larkin in response to the pressure of overseas Jewish needs. At the outset, it served principally as a fund raising agency, in cooperation with the United Jewish Appeal. Its great merit lay in the manner in which it brought small, unorganized Jewish communities into an overall plan of efficient campaigning. But, functioning as a voluntary, loosely knit association, it was unable to exert a strong influence on local community

organization. It appeared to be more of an association of local leaders than an official representative of communities. Despite these weaknesses, it was able to effect certain basic changes in the outlook of the separate communities, to offer them a broader perspective. Thus, at present, there is a strong and favorable sentiment, in Portland at least, for its revival.

Philip W. Lown of Lewiston was for many years a guiding hand of the Maine Jewish Committee[1]. In 1945, with the assumption of additional duties, it was reorganized as the Maine Jewish Council. Among the Council's new tasks were the advancement of Jewish education and the creation of a Jewish summer camp for children.

Nobart Schapiro was engaged as executive director of the Maine Jewish Committee. He was succeeded by Dr. Alexander Kohanski, a noted Jewish educator. A survey was made of the educational needs of Maine and of particular communities, including Portland. Among achievements of the Council in the educational field, was the organization of Sunday schools in smaller communities. In addition, uniform standards and curricula for all schools in Maine were established and provision was made for training Sunday school personnel. The Council also provided instruction, by mail, of Jewish children who lived in remote sections.

Despite the many hurdles in the educational field, efforts of the Maine Jewish Council laid the foundation for future endeavors to bring back into the mainstream of Jewish life the young and older Jews who were cut off from all contacts with it.

The creation of Camp Lown was another solid contribution of the Council. Organized in 1946 under Council sponsorship, Camp Lown continues today under separate management. It offers boys and girls summer camp life in a Jewish environment, emphasizing religious and cultural values.

Surveying briefly the span of nearly ninety years, from the founding of the Portland Jewish community until the present, we note several turning points in that course of development, denoting the end of one period and the birth of another.

The first significant marker was the founding of Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh. Until 1904, Portland could boast of a robust religious life, but could not point to one impressive synagogue. The erection of the Shaarey Tphiloh Synagogue was more than an architectural achievement. It brought unity and cohesion to the life of the community. It united diverse groups and became the central institution.

The next significant achievement was the organization of Port-

land Hebrew School in 1908, which eliminated the chaos in educational life and provided a central source of Jewish instruction for the young. This opened a period of unusual vitality in religious life, which was not seriously affected even by the split in Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh shortly after World War I.

In 1929, the Vaad Hoir played the role that Shaarey Tphiloh had played in its early days. The community had grown much larger now. There were several synagogues. The Vaad created a unity amid diversity and under its aegis Portland Jewry was once more united and strong.

Two new institutions, the Jewish Community Center and the Jewish Federation also stand out as markers. The emergence of the Center as an independent recreational and cultural force, introduced a new element in a community where the synagogue was always central. Jewish life in Portland became more secularized, and the status of the synagogue was immeasurably transformed. Creation of the Federation in 1942 made possible maximum financial mobilization but it evolved into a supra-community organization similar to the directorate of a Kehillah. To achieve this end, every organization surrendered its freedom to solicit funds and its freedom to act independently in certain situations without the approval of the Federation. In return for this partial surrender, the organizations received benefits of professional guidance, a degree of financial security and the elimination of the chaos that is a by-product of an unorganized community.

Because of its role in the community, the Federation is able to achieve a comprehensive aproach to community problems that would ordinarly be impossible. The organic approach to social service work and education that the Federation has made possible through its Jewish Family Services and its Bureau of Jewish Education, indicate the systematic manner in which it may yet reorganize other aspects of community life in the future.

Finally, we point to Temple Beth El as another marker along the course. Although we are still too close to events, and the Temple is still too young for us to evaluate accurately its impact upon the community, we already have seen how it has transformed the religious climate. The Conservative movement is firmly entrenched in Portland and its impact on Orthodoxy has been twofold. On the one hand, it has brought pressure to bear on the Orthodox congregations by its very existence as a contrast. On the other, it has stirred a strong reaction from the Orthodox community to transfer its facilities to newer sections of the city. The end result may well be a balance of power, with the barest in-

sinuation of innovations in the Orthodox synagogues.

We conclude our survey of the development of the Jewish community of Portland with the words delivered by Barnard Aaronson at the Portland Centennial Celebration of 1886, which we cited in an early chapter.

> May the next centennial celebration show as much marked progress as the present has over the past, and may our children be proud of the efforts of their fathers.

For every conclusion is in reality only a new beginning.

REFERENCE IN CHAPTER XVII

[1]Among the leading representatives of Portland, were Abraham S. Levey, Saul G. Chason, Joseph Wigon, Sidney W. Wernick, Barnett I. Shur, Harold P. Nelson, Harold J. Potter, Joseph W. Larkin and Israel Bernstein.

APPENDIX

MEMBERS OF PORTLAND LODGE, B'NAI B'RITH (1874-1880)

Charter Members

Barnard Aaronson
Morris Woolf
M. Herzberg
S. C. Abrahams
Isaac Gossman
Joseph Levy
Robert Boas (of Bangor)

The Other Initial Members

Solomon Schryver
William Schryver
Zorach Hirshon
Solomon Mathias
Moses Fonseca*
Jacob Judelson*
Isaac Judelson*
Joseph Woolf (Wolf) *
Joseph W. Cohen (Biddeford)
Samuel De Groot*
Morris Stearns
William Sulky*
Shyer Berman*
Isaac Abrams
A. W. Abrahams
Solomon Rubin
Lewis Harris
Ludwig Strenitz
Isaac W. Isaacson (Lewiston)
Julius Waterman (Bangor)
J. Weiler
David Gallert (Bangor)
Marks Gallert (Bangor)
Samuel Kahn
Oscar Newhouse
Simon Harris

Members Who Joined In Later Years

Alex S. Isaacson (possibly Lewiston)
George Ehrenfried (Lewiston)
William Pulverman
Simon Stahl (possibly Solomon C. Stahl, of Groveton, N. H.)
F. Friedman (Lewiston)
Isaac Greenberg (possibly Lewiston)
L. Kirshstein
Isador Steinberger
Jacob Wetzler
Solomon Shine
Sigmund Newhouse

Morris Schmuckler
Simon Friedman (possibly Lewiston)
Gurt J. Peavy
Nathan Greenberg (possibly Lewiston)

*These names are frequently spelled differently in various records. The names appear here as they were listed in the records of the Lodge.

Wherever we have been able to determine the domicile of members outside of Portland, we have so indicated, or indicated the possibility that that individual lived in a given town. In some cases, it is possible that out-of-town members later moved to Portland. This is known to have been the case with Robert Boas, and may apply to others also listed.