

THE JEWISH SCENE

in new jersey's raritan valley

1698-1948

by
Ruth Marcus Patt

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PREFACE

The Jewish community of the Raritan Valley has become an integral part of the area, with deep-seated roots. Although there are no longer descendants of the earliest Jewish settlers here, some of today's families have ties that go back to the mid-nineteenth century. Large numbers can trace their ancestor's arrival here to the turn of the century. The struggle of these families to gain a foothold in America on the banks of the Raritan River is the story I choose to explore in this publication - a history which will scan some 250 years from 1698 to 1948.

The years which follow 1948 I leave for future research for since then fundamental changes have occurred within the local Jewish community. Similar changes have affected many other urban Jewish communities throughout the United States. The rise of the State of Israel, following the holocaust, has probably brought about the most profound changes upon Jewish communities everywhere. In addition, these same years have seen the city of New Brunswick - hub of the Raritan Valley - undergo radical changes as its suburban areas grew and its population changed, leaving all groups of citizens - including Jews - to cope with these changes. Finally, these years have also seen marked changes in the stability of the Jewish community, brought about by a growing tendency to deemphasize the institution of family, an increasing incidence of inter-marriage, a decreasing Jewish birth rate, and finally the retirement of many of our senior citizens into areas outside of the Raritan Valley. Offsetting these losses to our once stable Jewish community, however, have been the huge numbers of transplanted Jewish families settling in New Brunswick's suburban areas. This history of more recent years must wait and crystalize before it can be subjected to analysis, judgement, and historical perspective.

It is hoped that this book will not only encourage the oldtimers to recall and rejoice in their collective history, but that it may even help the newcomers to feel themselves a part of this tapestry.

It must be said at the outset that researching this book was complicated by the fact that most organizations and institutions have not kept written records. Interviewing those who lived through certain events often provided differing versions so that the researcher could never be certain of the facts. Many who might have had knowledge of the happenings have either died, moved away, or could not remember.

I did have access, however, to several documents which helped me immeasureably. First and foremost, I acknowledge the use of an incomplete

paper researched and written by Rabbi Nathaniel M. Keller on the early history of the Jews of New Brunswick. He was still at work on it when he died in 1961 and it was this paper which primarily inspired me to write this book. I also found helpful, in getting facts for comparative purposes, a 1943 Jewish population survey of the locale whose sources I have not been able to trace, although it seems to be a college student's thesis with instructor's comments throughout.

These two major information sources, together with synagogue and organizational records and Jewish community publications casting light on an event here and there; books by local historians such as John P. Wall and William Benedick; other books, records, and newspaper clippings found in the Rutgers Library and the New Brunswick Public Library have been my primary resources. This material, plus many interviews with people in the community, have blended into a potpourri of historical morsels, to which I have tried to give continuity and character. There still remain many gaps in our history waiting to be filled. I felt that there was an urgency, however, to get whatever was available into printed form.

A word about the specific names included in this history, and of course the hundreds of names necessarily omitted which are no less a part of our story. As a general rule of thumb, names used have been organizational presidents, founders, original officers, and those who introduced new ideas, or were exemplary of a way of life under discussion. In secular endeavors, an effort was made to include only those who seemed to be the earliest examples in each field. There may be many omissions and an occasional error, because of the usual limitations of research and for any of these I extend sincere apologies. Documentation in writing, for any errata, will be welcomed for use in future research, and for deposit in the local Jewish archives.

It should also be clarified what is meant by the *Raritan Valley,* so that the reader can be aware of the intended scope of this book. The rule of thumb was to include any community which considered New Brunswick as its hub, where the Jewish citizens would gravitate naturally towards New Brunswick institutions, organizations and social services. The parameters of this so-called Raritan Valley therefore have differed in every period. For instance, in the earliest period the settlements in Bound Brook are included, because not only was this area part of Piscataway Township at the time, but so too was New Brunswick. The Jews referred to in those days left several indications of their using New Brunswick as a home base. In the more recent period covered, the range of communities widens to include Highland Park, South River, Sayreville, North Brunswick, South Brunswick, East Brunswick, parts of Edison, parts of Somerset, Jamesburg - all who look to New Brunswick as the center city. At this point, however, Bound Brook is no longer considered part of this Raritan Valley since its current orientation (for Jewish community services) is presently Somerville.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband Milton S. Patt, for encouraging me to use my time in this endeavor, and for advancing the funds to underwrite this publication. Both of us are proud to be numbered among the Jews of the Raritan Valley, specifically of the New Brunswick community. In a way,

this effort is our way of saying thank you for the heritage that was handed down to us. It is also our way of handing over this heritage to future generations, hoping that they will treasure it and be strengthened by it, as we were. It is to two of that generation - our grandchildren Joshua Charles Patt and Andrea Marcus Patt - that I dedicate this book.

INTRODUCTION

A sense of *déjà vu* comes over me when I wander through the streets of New Brunswick today. While the character behind the walls of the city's buildings has changed considerably, there remains a familiarity to the veneer itself.

The doctor's office I visit may be the very same home where I had spent hours trading stamps with my best friend. The supermarket I occasionally stop in sits on the former property of the local swimming pool, where I spent many a hot summer day. There is a sense of return, wherever I go.

I remind myself that two generations ago my grandparents walked these same streets. They might have been walking to the trolley car on Codwise Avenue - now Joyce Kilmer Avenue; they might have been attending services at the shule on Richmond Street; or shopping at the farmer's market on Hiram Street, or just walking across Livingston Avenue to play 'pisha pasha' with a cousin.

I also think about my parents who, a generation ago, walked to the same schools I did, drove their five daughters in the Pierce Arrow with the fold-up seats to buy shoes on Church Street, or walked to Sam's corner grocery store. Mother would take a bus downtown to Davidson's Market to pay the monthly bills, Dad spent an evening at the Elks playing cards, attended the weekly Lions Club luncheon at the Woodrow Wilson Hotel, or went to meetings at the YMHA. Most of these places still exist; they are only inhabited by different people, occupied by other tenants.

Here is my grandfather's home on Lee Avenue, where he lived when I was very small. I can just see the succah behind the back door, where he welcomed us for refreshments. And there is his last home across the street from my own Temple on Livingston Avenue, where the family gathered from all over to crowd around his table for the Seders. How certain we children were as we opened the door for Elijah, that we could see his white shadow reflected in the windows of the High School. And how dearly I remember the Chanukah parties there, with all of us clutching the five dollar gold pieces that Grandpa gave us each year as we kissed him good-night. Grandpa's house was always the center of activities on the holidays, and only after he died did that center move over to our home, since Mother was the oldest. But Grandpa's presence always remained. His dented Kiddush cup, his wine-stained matzoh cloth, his torn Haggadahs continued to be used. Today they are treasures, added to my own collection.

Now I have developed my own family celebrations, perhaps not as orthodox in detail as my grandfather's, but still traditional in a more liberal style, for I was educated in the Reform tradition. Will my children and my grandchildren look back and find their Judaic memories pleasant too, and will these memories sustain and strengthen their faith, as they have done for me? There can be no guarantee, of course. I can only hope that this book will not only help them, but all the future generations of New Brunswick's families, whether they be the offspring of the earliest settlers, or the most recent arrivals in the area's suburbs. I hope it will help them to gain a perspective about their heritage, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of pride; and that they will use these new found sensitivities to feel an integral part of the greater New Brunswick community - now known as the Raritan Valley.

R.M.P. 1978

PRELUDE TO HISTORY

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves.

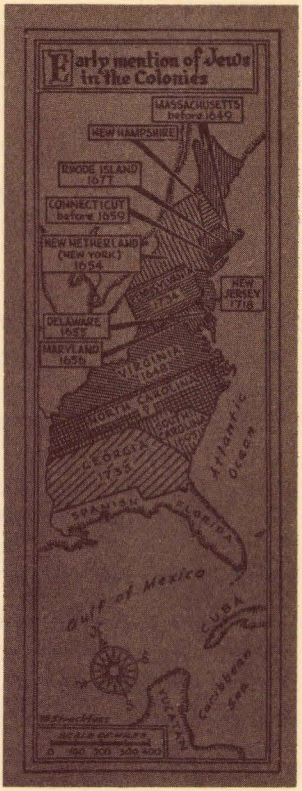
The very names recorded here are strange, of foreign accent, and of different climes;
Alvares and Rivera interchange
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea that desert desolate,
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind.

.....Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (on visiting cemetary in Newport, R.I.)

To begin the narrative of the Jewish presence in the Raritan Valley, it is necessary to retrace our steps back to the year 1492. Every student of history knows that the year 1492 was crucial to the development of America. That was the year Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand financed Christopher Columbus in his explorations to establish new trade-routes to India, with the resultant unexpected discovery of the Americas. Not every student of history, however, is as aware of the fact that this same year Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand ordered the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian kingdom. The Inquisition which followed saw many Jews fleeing to Europe or other safe havens, or suffering forced conversion. Many of those who converted to Christianity continued to secretly worship in the Jewish tradition, and these became known as Marranos. Whether there was a connection between these two events in 1492 can only be conjectured, but Columbus himself leaves such an impression in his diary. "After the Spanish monarchs had banished all the Jews from their kingdoms and territories," the diary begins, "in the same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my voyage of discovery to the Indies." Among this crew were several Marranos, including Luis de Torres, the interpreter, and Bernal, the ship's doctor.[1]

Subsequent migrations from Spain and the rest of Europe brought many settlers to the New World, especially to South America and the islands of the Carribbean. Among them were Marranos who hoped to cast off the bonds and dangers of enforced conversion, once they were outside of the Spanish domain. It was not easy for them to emigrate, however, because they had to circumvent many regulations set down to prevent those who "recently converted to our holy faith"...or "any child or grandchild who



Early map of Jewish presence in Colonies indicates no knowledge of Aaron Louzada settling in the Raritan Valley in 1698.

had (any taint of) Jewish ancestors", or "anyone accused of heresy" to settle in the New World.[2]

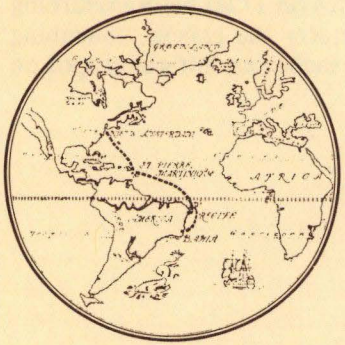
The Carribbean settlements in the New World proved ideal for growing sugar and by the 17th century a great demand for this product was created throughout Europe, providing those with money and know-how the opportunity to capitalize on this demand. Many of the successful Jewish merchants throughout Europe, and those who had settled earlier in Brazil, sent their children to the Carribbean Islands to seek opportunities as merchants, refiners, and planters in the sugar industry. On one of these islands, Barbados, we find the initial mention of the Louzada family, one of whom was to reach the banks of the Raritan River, in what was then Middlesex County, in the year 1698. The Louzada family was one of the distinguished Jewish families of the island, one on whom the Spanish Dukedom 'do Losada y Lousada' was revived in 1848.[3] This seems an indication of the Spanish origins of the family before its banishment by the Inquisition.

We are told that Jewish settlers had arrived in English-owned Barbados as early as 1625, having come from Europe, Brazil, Surinam, and Martinique. They were key figures not only in the sugar trade, but also the molasses, tobacco, and rum trades - sending their vessels to ply the other islands and the North American settlements. In 1655, Barbados, by petition

of her Jewish settlers, granted formal recognition to the Jews and the right to enjoy the privileges and laws of the island.[4] Records state that David Baruch Louzada 'and other Hebrews' were made free denizens by his Majesty's decree when in 1669 they petitioned against the refusal to accept the testimony of Jews in the court of the colony. The Jews continued to pay special taxes there, nevertheless, until 1721. By 1679 the Jews of Barbados had built their first synagogue in Bridgetown, and some time later formed a branch synagogue in Speightstown.[5]

At mid 17th century, Aaron Baruch Louzada was one of the leading Jewish merchants of Bridgetown. His brother Moses Barrow resided in London, and was an accredited banker. The members of this prominent Jewish family had anglicized their names to Barru, Barruh, Barrow, Burrough, or Baruch, and some of them had become landowners of considerable importance in another English island in the Carribbean, Jamaica.[6]

One of the scions of another Jewish family in Barbados, Rowland Gideon, was apparently a friend of the Louzadas. He was a rich, young, attractive man, apparently something of a roué. He was a constant source of trouble to his family because of the debts he incurred, so it was decided a change of venue would help discipline him, and the errant son was sent to Boston in 1674. Boston was a promising seaport with a growing trade center, and it seemed both a safe and an austere place for Rowland Gideon.[7]



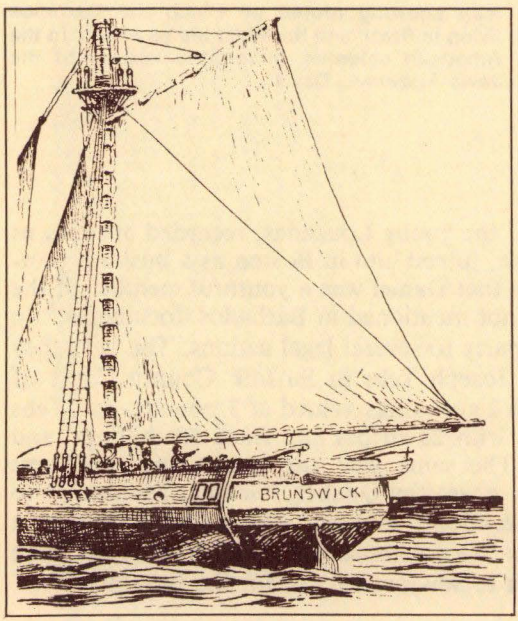
Map showing routes by which the Marranos living in Brazil and the West Indies arrived in the American colonies. (Illustrated History of the Jews, Mazer and Davis.)

There is evidence that one of the young Louzadas, recorded at times as Daniel Burrow, or Daniel Baruh, joined him in Boston as a business partner. One source deems it likely that Daniel was a youthful member of the Barbados clan, although he is not mentioned in Barbados documents.[8] In Boston the two of them were party to several legal actions. The year they arrived, 1674, they accused a Joseph Tebs in Suffolk County Court of stealing 9 pounds in money and 2 gold rings valued at 3 pounds, and Tebs was found guilty and whipped with 20 stripes and fined 40 shillings, and delivered into their custody. The same year the two young men were involved in another suit against a wealthy Quaker, Nicholas Moulder, "to be non-suited for want of prosecution." Gideon often served as their own lawyer, reminding the court that "God command our Fathers that the Same Law should be for the Stranger & Sowjourner - as for the Israellits."[9]

We lose track of Daniel Baruh (Louzada) at this point, but we know that in 1679 the peripatetic Gideon left for Antigua and resided there on the Isle of Nevis. In 1692 he returned to Barbados, and two years later sailed for London.[10] Did either Baruh or Gideon report to the Louzada clan of the opportunities in the American colonies? It seems a valid presumption.

When next we hear of the Louzada clan, once again it is Aaron who enters the picture, and we can only surmise that it is the same Aaron Louzada of Bridgetown, Barbados. He must have left his home and successful business, and set sail for New York to establish a mercantile business there. He also seems to have Americanized his name to Lazaider. He had his son Moses working for him, as well as John R. Myers, an employee who was to marry his daughter Catherine. By 1698, Aaron turned over the management of the dry goods emporium to his son and son-in-law, renaming it "Lazaider and Myers", in order to retire. He must have been quite young at the time, for his death was not recorded until November 1744,[11] some 46 years later.

Why Louzada, or Lazaider, upon retirement chose to travel south we cannot know, but it was likely once he decided on the southern route that he headed for the Raritan Valley, for this was the natural route to Philadelphia. Over 20 years before William Penn had authorized surveyors to look into the possibility of constructing a canal across 'the Jerseys' from the Delaware River to the New York bay.[12] Another possibility is that Louzada had once encountered Richard Gibb, captain of the sloop *Brunswick* who was known to have called at the port of Barbados (in 1724) before returning to his home port of New Brunswick.[13] Whatever the reason, something made Aaron Louzada (Lazaider) pause as he reached an intriguing spot on the banks of the Raritan River.



Sloop "Brunswick", owned by Captain Richard Gibb is known to have plied the waters between Barbados and New Brunswick in the early eighteenth century. (Home News files)

Chapter II

THE EARLY FAMILIES

"In the beginning....." - Genesis

We cannot be certain just how Aaron Louzada (Lazaider) found his way to the bend in the Raritan River where it makes a westerly turn in the area known today as Bound Brook. One possibility is that he travelled by ferry-boat from New York to the site of what is now New Brunswick, then changed to a stage-wagon to continue west. This was to be the popular mode of travel some thirty years hence.[1]

It seems more likely, however, that in 1698 a man of some means, in search of a new home, would have hired a stage-wagon immediately after ferrying over to the Jersey side, to make his way south with his wife and his household goods. He undoubtedly passed through the flourishing communities of Elizabethtown, Woodbridge, and Piscataway, possibly changing conveyances and horses along the way. He was traveling through East Jersey, and entering the area the General Assembly had fifteen years before designated as Middlesex County. Driving through a dense cedar forest, bogged down by the treacherous swamplands, known as 'Prigmore's Swamp', he would have arrived at the dock of Inian's Ferry on the banks of the Raritan River. Up to this point he might have seen a few of the Leni-Lenape Indians which sparsely inhabited the area, and occasional signs of the Dutch settlers from New Amsterdam who had established homes around the Raritan River in the early 1600s. Although this was the site of what would be New Brunswick, it was not to be called that for another 25 years (1724). At that time maps referred to it as Piscataway, which encompassed all of what is now Middlesex County, taking in both sides of the Raritan River, and a large section of what is now Somerset, going as far northwest as Bound Brook. From what is now South River to Bound Brook, the land was laid out as the 'Raritan Lots'. What homes had been erected were generally along the riverfront, with farming areas all around. One area known as 'a fording place' on a 'rocky rift' was often shallow enough to be crossed at low tide in a wagon or on horseback. For the most part, however, travelers used the ferry. It was originally run by Daniel Cooper, the first known settler in the New Brunswick area. By the time Lazaider reached the shores of the Raritan, John Inian had purchased the ferry, together with two lots along a mile of the river, running two miles in depth. Inian used the ferry not only to carry travelers across, but also to transport the produce from the nearby farms into other river settlements.[2]

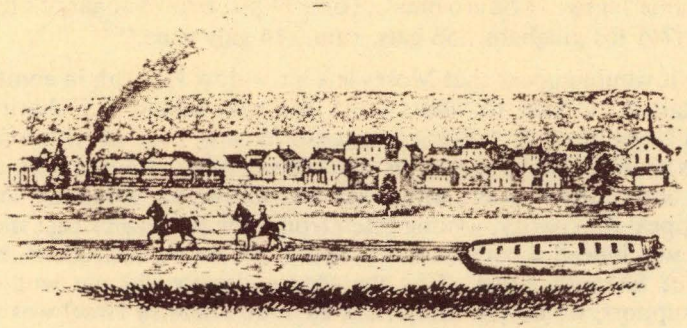
Most likely, Aaron Lazaider and his wife, before continuing on their way, stayed overnight at Henry Greenland's inn at the foot of the dock.

Then changing to fresh horses, they went on in search of their new home. The paths the stage-wagon traveled were crude ones, made originally by the Indians, and were often dangerous with deep ruts and mud. Other hazards of nature might have confronted them as well. Cold winters along the Raritan River caused much damage when the masses of ice broke up in the river. Flooding, known as 'freshets' would inundate the area, causing buildings, livestock, and crops to be carried away in the swirling waters. The roads were kept open, however, and constantly repaired and improved, because this was an important trading post area - a key link between New York and the Delaware.

It seems likely that Lazaider took the path that followed the river for a few miles, keeping an eye out for a good spot to settle. Just up on the riverbank, not far from where the Green Brook enters its path, he selected his site, and it was here that he built what was to be known as the 'Jew House'. It has been described as "probably the finest building in Bound Brook for many years. It had large and handsome double parlors, a luxury only enjoyed by the very wealthy in those early days. The partitions between those rooms were inlaid with alternate stripes of black walnut and white oak. The closets and cupboards had beautiful glass doors, the sashes of which were entirely covered with gilding, as were also the shelves inside. The exposed beams in the house were ornamented with beautiful carvings in high relief, and to show these more perfectly the beams were painted white." At this point, there were only two other houses in all of Bound Brook.[3]

For some reason, two years later in 1700, although retaining possession of the home he built, Aaron Lazaider purchased the house and property of Thomas Codrington,* and for the next 100 years three generations of Lazaiders were known to have occupied it. This was a house Codrington had built in 1683, the first to be built in the community. It was an unusual house, given the Indian name of Racawachanna (meaning "the loomy flat by the running brook") by its builder. Again we have a detailed description. "The house was built on a slight elevation of ground, sloping on all sides, which tradition says was an Indian mound where the Raritan tribe buried their dead. If this be true, it is a cause for the belief of the past generations that the house was haunted. So strong was the fear produced by this belief that many of the colored servants dared not go out alone at night, expecting that some Indian ghost would sure carry them away....The house was a most quaint and curious building, unlike any other house of ancient date in Bound Brook. There was no second story or no cellar. The roof was very steep, with a wide projection coming nearly to the windows. The upper and lower window sashes were of different sizes, the upper containing three rows of glass, the lower only two. The size of the panes of glass was about five by seven. The house contained, seven rooms, four of which were for sleeping. The fire places were very large, covering nearly one whole side of

**The possibility of a connection between this Thomas Codrington and the founder of Codrington College in Barbados could not be verified before book went to press. If true, it would lend credence to a possible relationship between Codrington and Louzada back in Barbados.*



Early view of Bound Brook, showing railroad train and canal boat in the mid 1800s. Area is approximately the site of the Louzada houses built 150 years before. (N.J., America's Main Road by John Cunningham)

the room, and it is said were large enough to receive a cord of wood at once. Hard wood shingles, very large in size, were used for siding."[4]

Through legal documents, and the newspapers of the day, we learn something of the life of Aaron Lazaider. In 1719 he was witness to a will. At another time he advertised the sale of ten acres of land. And on another occasion he advertised a reward of 40 shillings for the return of a runaway slave.[5] It is interesting to note that it was a widespread practice at that time for wealthy Jewish families to own one or two house servants, but that the number of Jews owning large numbers of slaves was relatively small.[6]

In 1739 Aaron's son Moses, and son-in-law John Meyers, apparently sold their dry goods emporium in New York, and moved to Bound Brook, where they opened a shop in 'The Jew House'. Aaron died in 1744, and left his property to his two children. His son inherited Racawachanna, and when Moses died a few years later in 1750, the property went to his son David, after which it passed out of the family. Aaron's daughter Catherine and her husband John R. Meyers inherited 'The Jew House'. Catherine lived until 1762, John until 1765 at which time he was purported to be 92 years old. The Meyers in turn left 'The Jew House' to their widowed daughter. This daughter was a Tory sympathizer, and in the Spring of 1777 she invited Lord Cornwallis and his staff to use 'The Jew House' as British army headquarters. It is recorded that Catherine Louzada and Abraham Loxley posted their marriage bond in Somerset on June 1, 1779. This could be the same woman, for we know Catherine eventually married one of the officers of Cornwallis' staff and abandoned the house, which was taken over by the town. Her brother, John Meyers, Jr. later sued to regain possession of the house, and after successfully doing so, he sold it.[7]

The Lazaiders, Aaron and his son Moses, were prolific litigants in the county courts during their residence in Bound Brook. There were at least 25 cases in the Middlesex courts, 12 in Hunterdon, and 65 in Somerset. Mostly they were in the position as plaintiffs, but twice as defendents.[8] They must have been business men, perhaps traders in spices and liquor, as revealed in the inventory of Moses' effects at the time of his death in 1750, a document

signed in Hebrew by his widow Hannah. The inventory included "1 Negro wench name Jenny...1 Negro man...Tom, 12 pts. brown sugar, 13 lbs black pepper...7½ lbs gingham...56 gals. rum...14 gals wine."[9]

While it would appear that Moses left his widow Hannah in comfortable circumstances, in just six short years she was asking for charity from Shearith Israel, the only existing synagogue in New York which served Jews for miles around. While she seems to have had other children who married and left home, she was left with what was known as 'a lunatic son'. She would appeal for charity, writing often from New Brunswick that she was in need. It was indeed a pathetic story which can be reconstructed from the records of Shearith Israel. Why the Meyers family did not lend her the needed support, we do not know, but by 1756 Shearith Israel was sending her support for herself and her son for four weeks. Another time her pension was augmented from 8 to 10 shillings per week. Some time later, at a meeting to which Mrs. Aaron Louzada - the apparently wealthy mother-in-law - was summoned, it was decided to send Hannah to Lancaster, Pa. Her son was to remain in New York, to be maintained in part by his grandmother. It appeared that Hannah Louzada was not content in Lancaster, and we read that she was to be 'dispacht' to the Jerseys. Her debts were to be paid and suit brought by Hayman Levy, 'to be paid out of the public money.' This item was dated January 12, 1760. In November 1761, she wrote again to the congregation from New Brunswick pleading for money because she was ill. She chided the congregation by "hoping, sir, it isn't out of sight, out of mind, for here I lay suffering for thought of wood and provisions!" The directions for sending these provisions were faint and barely legible. They were, it seems, in a different hand than that of the main body of the letter. The last of the allowances recorded in Shearith Israel's ledger was dated October 18, 1774.[10]

The graves of most of these Louzadas (Lazaiders) can be found in the Chatham Square Cemetery in New York, although some have been reinterred in the 21st Street Cemetery. From available evidence, all subsequent generations of Louzadas intermarried, and converted to either Protestantism or Catholicism, leaving no known Jewish heirs to this pioneering family.[11] It is interesting to note that in Bound Brook, in the area of their first arrival, Rabbi Keller learned that an excavation of land in 1840 turned up a shofar, a ritual slaughtering knife, and traces of a cemetery,[12] lending credence to at least a modicum of traditional observance by these early settlers. Rabbi Keller, unfortunately, did not document this information, so that it cannot be corroborated.

Soon after Aaron Louzada and his wife blazed a path into the Raritan Valley, a few other Jewish families were attracted into the surrounding communities which can be considered a part of the greater New Brunswick area. Rev. Davis, in his 1893 publication, refers to yet another home in Bound Brook known as the Campbell House, built in 1684, which "in its last days (sometime prior to 1815) was in a very dilapidated condition and was occupied by a family of Jews."[13] For at least one hundred years, however, their numbers were minimal, as they seemed to be throughout New Jersey. The slow growth of the Jewish population was attributed to the fact that the State had not granted them full equality until the first half of the 19th

century, although it must be said that they seemed to live here with their neighbors peacefully enough. One historian has stated that until 1750, most New Jersey Jews felt some affinity toward Philadelphia Jews, considering this city their spiritual and commercial center.[14] Although this would not seem to be true with the Louzada family, we can begin to see this relationship developing in some of the families which followed.

In 1722 it was recorded that Daniel Nunez* sat as one of the Justices of the Peace in the Middlesex County Quarter Sessions Court on August 21, in Piscataway. The City of New Brunswick was not to be established for two more years, and the entire area was then known as Piscataway, so we cannot be certain just where Nunez lived. We know he was at first a peddler, and later had a business somewhere in Piscataway. He also held the office of town clerk of Piscataway. He was apparently one of the earliest Jews to hold public office in America. Rabbi Keller learned that the name of Daniel Nunez de Costa appeared in the records of Shearith Israel and he concluded that it was likely that this was one and the same person.[15] Other Nunez families were large plantation owners in Surinam in 1675, leading traders in Jamaica in 1693,[16] and successful dealers in diamonds and coral between London and Madras, India in the 1750s.[17] Any connection between Daniel Nunez of Piscataway and these families remains to be verified.

In the 1760s, there is reference to several families by the name of Levy in the area of Spotswood, N.J., sometimes referred to as Spottsville in East Jersey. On August 14, 1760 we first hear of Myers Levy, a Dutch Jew, celebrating the circumcision of his son. The earliest known *mohel* (ritual circumcisor) in America, Abraham Isaac Abrahams,** a Litvak from New York, traveled to Spotswood for the ceremony.[18] But on October 15 of that year, this same Levy was in trouble with his creditors. An article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* described him as stocky, red-faced, black haired, and bearded, and reported that he had departed with his wife and five children, absconding with a wagon-load of unpaid for merchandise valued at 2300 pounds, heading for Philadelphia. An award for his apprehension, offering $800 for his return with the goods, but only $50 without the stolen property, was made by a group of ten merchants who were the creditors, including David Franks, Bernard Gratz, and Moses Heymann.[19]

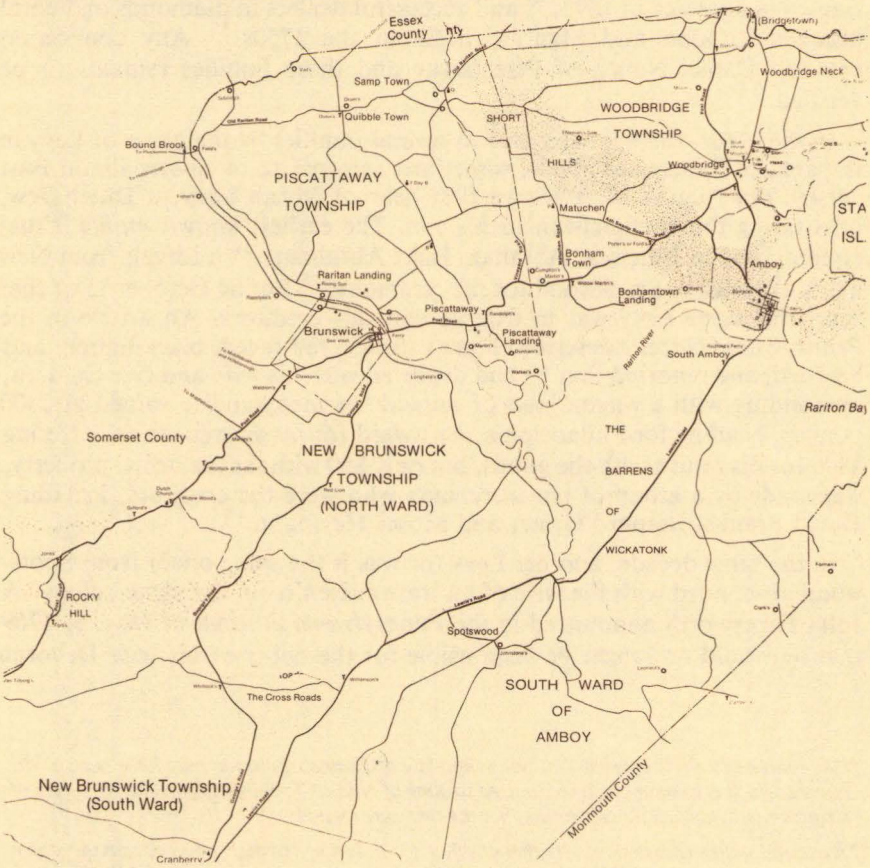
In the same decade, another Levy (or was it the same one?) from Spotswood absconded with the wife of an irate citizen from the same colony. A John Farnsworth announced in the *Pennsylvania Journal* of Nov. 5, 1769 that he would no longer be responsible for the debts of his wife Deborah

**One source (Zassler) reported that one son-in-law of Hannah Louzada may have been a Mr. Nunes, which is a common Americanized spelling of Nunez. The timing, plus the proximity of residence, provide fuel for conjecture that the two were related.*

***The same source (Zassler) reports that another son-in-law of Hannah Louzada was Abraham Abrahams, married to Elkaley Esther. In 1762 Abrahams filed papers with the State of N.J. that his brother-in-law Jacob Louzada was "a lunatick and unsound in his memory and understanding."*

because "she likes the said Levy better than me....intends to live with him as he will maintain her as a gentlewoman. I have waited on Mr. Levy respecting the affair, from whom I have received no other satisfaction than insolent language...."[20]

Here again we are unable to ascertain to which Levy family these rather dubious characters belonged. There was a well known merchant Hyman Levy of Houndsditch, London, referred to in a memorabilia of the Franks family from 1738-1741[21] In Jewish archives a Moses Levy was mentioned as a New Jersey resident in 1718. Among the early shipowners registered in Philadelphia was Hayman Levy.[22] The New York firm of Levy (again, Hayman Levy), Lyons, and Co. was said to be the largest fur trader in the colonies (and at one time the employer of John Jacob Astor!).[23] In the 1770's Hayman Levy was listed as president of Shearith Israel.[24] It might be recalled that a Hayman Levy had figured in a legal suit involving Hannah Louzada in 1760. Again in 1799, a Levy Myers (the same Myers Levy?) was one of the trustees listed for the burial grounds in Richmond, Virginia.[25] Perhaps future research will make some connections.



Map of the Raritan Valley and surrounding communities as they appeared in 1776. (Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

Chapter III

THE GERMAN AND BAVARIAN SETTLERS

"Brave the Atlantic, hope's broad anchor weigh,
A western sun will geld your future day...."

...words from Jewish poetess, Penina Moise

While only 3,000 Jews had settled in America by 1790, the figure had already doubled in 1830. Most of the earlier Jews had been of Sephardic origin, as we have seen even in the Raritan Valley, but by the start of the nineteenth century the influx of German and Bavarian Jews began. For the most part the earliest German arrivals were well educated, cultured, and enterprising. They came to America because the economic and social situation of the Jews in Germany began to deteriorate following the defeat of Napoleon. Official anti-semitism and pogroms brought much suffering to the Jewish population. They were encouraged to immigrate by friends and relatives in America who wrote of the great opportunities for Jews there. They were stirred by the writers and the poets of the day with such words as head this chapter.[1] And so the German exodus began, and for unknown reasons, a number of the immigrants found their way to the Raritan Valley. One circumstance which might have encouraged them was that New Jersey granted her Jewish settlers full equality by the first part of the nineteenth century.[2]

We can see a picture of Raritan Valley at the time from various accounts of local historian John P. Wall. By the early nineteenth century it had become an important commercial area. Many farmers would arrive at the Raritan landing on wagons loaded with grain for shipment down river. They would stop at the White Hall Tavern nearby, which had become headquarters for news to these merchants. One of the vessels mentioned by Wall was the "Polly" owned by Barnet D. Kline (who Rabbi Keller suspected may have been Jewish).[3] Further interesting glimpses into New Brunswick in the early 1800s came from an advertisement of one George White, who offered for sale "shovels, molasses, Jews' harps, muslin, sugar, and anything else you wanted!" Once more, the boundaries of New Brunswick were in contention, for during an election in 1813, the town was partly in North Brunswick and partly in Franklin Township, "causing considerable annoyance to the voters."[4] From a book about the Neilson family, we get further glimpses into the life of the day. We learn in 1813 that New Brunswick doctors charged 25¢ per call. By 1853 the charge was raised to $1.00 per visit! We also learn that it was not easy to hire domestic servants in New Brunswick before 1831, so that families who could afford to do so, like the Neilsons, bought negro slaves for their households. Due to a New

Jersey law enacted in 1804 however, they had to permit their slaves' gradual emancipation.[5]

The first of these German-Jewish families recorded in the area was that of Bernard S. Judah, who petitioned the Common Council of New Brunswick in 1809 for permission to fix the drain in front of his home. A few years later, 1812, he was referred to as one of the leading business men of the time, a dealer in oil and window glass.[6] It seems most likely that Samuel Judah, the first known Jewish graduate of Rutgers University was his son. Samuel was born in New York in 1799, and after graduating Rutgers with an A.B. in 1816, he moved to Indiana where he became distinguished in law. He was a member of the Legislature in that state, the Speaker of the House, and a U.S. District Attorney.[7]

In 1832 the first coal was brought to New Brunswick in the schooner "Elizabeth", which sailed up the Raritan River. A Mr. Rosenbaum is recorded as the importer of this important fuel.[8]

In 1838, Louis Cohen (spelled Cohn in Temple records) came here from Germany and established a clothing store on Burnet Street. Although he is not mentioned in Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple records until 1888, when he began a fourteen year stint as President, we assume he must have been one of the Temple founders since many members of his family are buried in the early graves of the Temple's cemetery. His sister, Henrietta and her husband Solomon Hersh Friedel, who lived in Schlenger, Germany - a part of Prussia - joined him in New Brunswick in 1851, and took up residence at 9 Hiram Street. Their son Menasha married Fredrica; their daughter Josephine married Michael Frankel, who had come from Baden Baden, and whose children and grandchildren still reside in the community, and hold membership in the same Temple.

Next we learn of Aaron Wolfson, who left Koenigsburg, in the Prussian area of Germany and arrived in this country in 1849. He went first to California, and it is not known when he returned east, or why he selected New Brunswick as his destination. Within the next ten years, however, he had opened a men's clothing shop on Peace Street. He was recorded in 1859 as one of the founders of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, and in 1860 he was pictured among the leading merchants of New Brunswick. He also was the first Jew to serve on the Board of Education, somewhere between the 1870s and 1890s, the actual date unknown. He and his wife had nine children, one of whom was Rachel, mother of Gertrude Schlesinger Cohen, who with her children and grandchildren also still belongs to the same Anshe Emeth congregation.

Another early arrival from Germany (although we cannot be positive he was Jewish) was William Frank, mentioned as a leading manufacturer of candy at 15 Peace Street - an area where many of the Jews seem to have clustered. His wholesale and retail business started in 1854.[9]

The first edition of the New Brunswick directory, published in 1855-56 listed several other early Jewish citizens, with their businesses. The most intriguing was J. Levy's - Cheap Lace and Fancy Store, at 236 Burnet Street, Commerce Square. Its advertising boldly and proudly proclaimed,


J. LEVY'S
CHEAP LACE & FANCY STORE,
236 Burnet Street, Commerce Sq.,
A great variety of
RIBBONS, LACES, COLLARS, FANS,
TRIMMINGS,
FRENCH NEEDLE WORK,
FANCY BUTTONS, HOSIERY, GLOVES, FLOWERS,
Straw Bonnets, Hats, Mitts, &c. &c.
☞ Country Merchants supplied at New-York prices.
This store is closed from Friday evening to Saturday evening at half past 7.

Advertisement in July 1855 edition of the New Brunswick Directory.

"This store is closed from Friday evening to Saturday evening at half past seven." Other names included:

Isaac Bernard, Fancy Store, at 194 Burnet Street.
Abraham Fine, mechanic - College Ave. above Hamilton.
Moses Isaacs, Fancy Shoes - 6 Church Street
Mrs. Isaacs, Shoe dealer - 194 Burnet Street
Solomon Jacobs, Shoemaker - Jersy Ave., corner Seaman Street
J. Rosenberg - Fancy store - 19 Burnet Street.

Unfortunately Jewish history had its less-than-glorious moments at times, and the local newspapers of 1855 reported on a litigation battle between two of the local Jewish families, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Isaacs and J. Rosenberg. Harsh and untactful remarks between the litigants precipitated a free-for-all melee among the friends of both families. The journalistic value of such a story, using testimony of an Irish witness who included reference to the participants as Jews, gave it first page coverage, actually displacing the usual patent medicine ads found there![10]

Another reference to a Jewish citizen of New Brunswick was detected by Rabbi Keller in the September 1858 issue of *The Jewish Messenger,* where an editorial described the state of Jewry in New Jersey, mentioning a group in New Brunswick. Joseph Hess was listed as a member of the editorial board of the newspaper. By January 15th, his name was dropped from the masthead, but he was listed as the newspaper's agent and correspondant from New Brunswick.[11]

We also know of those who were the early members of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, when the congregation was chartered in 1859. These were Joseph Levitt, Joseph Biron, J.J. Frankenstein, William B. Plechner, Meyer Seckle, Elias Frankenstein, Ignatz Frankenstein, Aaron Wolfson - for the most part all Germanic names. Correspondance to Czeckoslovakia concerning their first Torah, was also in German.

A photograph of leading New Brunswick merchants in 1860 includes Aaron and Abraham Wolfson, Meyer Segel and Moses Levy.

Other early names can be taken from the graves in the old Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple plots. The earliest legible stone belongs to Ernestine Meyer, who died in 1868. She was the wife of Isaac Arnheim. The next recorded death was that of Rachel Wolfson, who died in 1869 at the age of 93. Clementine Livingston died in 1875. Graves with such names as



The earliest legible grave in Anshe Emeth plot in Elmwood Cemetery, that of Ernestine Meyer Arnheim, buried in 1869. (Photo by Louis Shrager)

Plechner, Crostein, Cohen, and Maier bore dates in the 1880s and 1890s. At least ten of the old stones are illegible, and of course may predate any of these mentioned.

The third family, headed by Samuel Lederer, which belonged to Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple since its early days and still has descendents in the area, arrived in this country in 1850 from Bohemia, Austria. Lederer settled first in Englishtown, later in New York, and finally in New Brunswick, where he opened a tannery in 1861 - a trade he had learned in Austria. One of his eleven children, Max, married Henrietta Sontheimer in 1892, and both continued to be prominent in Anshe Emeth affairs. Henrietta was the first Sisterhood president in 1900. Their daughter Edith married Harry Strauss and their children and grandchildren have remained active in the Temple.

By 1880, the Jewish population in New Brunswick was said to have numbered 100. Shortly thereafter the Russian and East European immigration accelerated, and by 1897 this figure suddenly rose to 280, amounting to more than 1% of the general population (which at that time was under 20,000.)[12]

In studying the records of these German and Bavarian families, indications are that they exhibited traits common to German Jewish settlers throughout America in mid nineteenth century. They were enterprising, cultured, eager to assimilate, and above all clannish. The genealogy of the local families show many interrelationships among them. Perhaps this last characteristic was a form of retaliation to the earlier Sephardic condescension towards them! This clannish attitude has disappeared in today's generation and marriages between young people of German and East European stock now are common occurences.



New Brunswick merchants of 1860 as they appeared in the New Brunswick Times, included (1) Moses Levy, (11) Aaron Wolfson, (13) Meyer Segel, and (20) Abe Wolfson.

Chapter IV

THE STEADY STREAM OF THE EAST EUROPEANS

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door." .....*Emma Lazarus,*

While there had already been a good number of Russian Jews arriving in America during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the massive immigration of East European Jews did not really begin until 1881. The onslaught of new immigrants ended abruptly in 1924 when the United States Congress established a quota system for immigration, but by then there were already over four million Jews here. Three quarters of them were East Europeans who had come in waves "totally altering the demographic and cultural profiles of American Jewry." [1]

Their motives for coming were somewhat different than those of the Germans who had preceded them. The East Europeans were suffering primarily from economic woes and a high degree of unemployment, although they too were spurred into action by overt anti-semitism, a desire to avoid lengthy military duty, and a series of devastating pogroms. They tended to have a high degree of literacy, an expert level of artisanship, much experience as tradesmen, and they were fanned by a keen ambition. They were primarily urban dwellers, even though many came from very small towns in the Pale of Settlement known as *stetls.* They streamed through Ellis Island, burdened with bundles containing their precious belongings, with babies in arms and assorted children clinging to them. Either entire families would come together, or the wageearner would arrive first to settle before sending for the others. Although they suffered from dire poverty during their early years here, the harshness of life was softened by the new freedom they found, the welcome they received from the earlier Russian settlers, and the hope that was always before them for the better life to come. It was said that the German group long settled on these shores was not at first cordial to these East European Jews. The Germans did not trust the newcomers, and undoubtedly considered them a threat to the niche they had made for themselves in society. Little by little, however, they grew to accept and admire these hard-working newcomers, despite their persistent use of the Yiddish language and the extremes of orthodoxy or secularism that many displayed.[2]

When the efforts were begun to close our country's doors to newcomers, the influential German Jews did not realize the significance of this action

for the East European Jews until it was too late. Belated efforts to work against the immigration quota system failed and by 1924 the quotas became law. [3]

Once again, the changing pattern in the Raritan Valley Jewish population duplicated what had developed throughout the nation. Starting in the 1880s significant numbers of immigrants began streaming in from Russia, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and indeed from every East European country. Many Sephardic Jews from Greece and Turkey began their migration to this area around the turn of the century. (Not to be overlooked was a small number of German families which continued to arrive in the area throughout this period, although many had been settled elsewhere in America for some time.) A large number of the East European settlers remained on the Lower East Side for a time before finding their way here. Some went first to other communities throughout the country, until, for any number of reasons, they made the decision to settle in the Raritan Valley.


J 22
T.S.S. POTSDAM
From Rotterdam
Date 22 NOV 1907
Name of Passenger

Cabin ticket of Sophie Grover who arrived with three young children to join husband Ephraim and two older children. (Grandmother to Felix Pansy of Jamesburg)

To obtain a sense of origins, the 1940 census of the city of New Brunswick revealed that of all the foreign-born Jews in the city in that year, 423 had come from Russia, 186 from Poland, 184 from Hungary, 66 from Austria, 96 from Greece or Turkey, and 47 from Germany. Over one third had come to New Brunswick within five years of their arrival in America. Seventy per cent had lived in New Brunswick more than 15 years, and a majority of that 70% for closer to 20 - 24 years. [4]

The earliest East European Jewish families arriving here must have been among those associated with the chartering of the first orthodox congregation, Ahavas Achim, in 1889. Those founders included Wolfe Levine, Benjamin Levine, Marks Levine, Abram Levine, Isaac Hendler, Morris Flomenhoft, Hersh Flomenhoft, Meyer Anekstein, Morris Greenberg, Kusiel Greenberg, Y.L. Hendler, Abraham Medinets, A.L. Fertig, Louis Glickman, Morris Martell, George Feller, John Davis, Israel Amder, Morris Adler, Max Levine, and Nathan Cohn. Although a few of the families were probably of German extraction, the majority of them had East European roots.

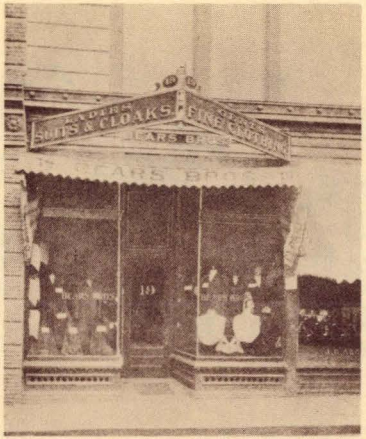
What was it about the Raritan Valley that was so appealing in attracting new immigrants? A number of reasons have surfaced.

By the end of the nineteenth century the Raritan Valley had become a major industrial area, spawning many job opportunities. More than 20,000 people lived within New Brunswick, many more in the surrounding communities. Merchandising of all kinds flourished to cater to this trade. With a minimum of capital and a maximum of effort and time, the Jewish immigrant had an opportunity to become an entrepreneur. This was a natural step up from the peddlar of goods that began so many careers in America.

We have already enumerated the earliest examples of New Brunswick's Jewish merchants in Chapter III.

As we continue in our history it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between the Germans and the East Europeans, because the migrations begin to blend. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century local records listed many new mercantile businesses. In 1868 Hirsh's millinery emporium was established. By 1877 Isaac Posner had opened a clothing shop, by 1879 the Levy family had opened what would be known as "Cheap John's", by 1889 M. Schwartzman had opened a fur shop, and by 1897 the Marks family had set up a dry goods and crockery emporium, and M. Abrams had established a shoe store. Also sometime before 1900 the Blums had a millinery shop, the Hershs' and Jacobs' had haberdasheries, and in South River the Livingstons and the Brewers had clothing shops. By the turn of the century dozens more Jewish-owned stores were established. Clothing shops, shoe shops, millineries, furriers, jewelers, hardware shops, furniture establishments, and food markets of all types abounded. The "downtown" section of New Brunswick - the vicinity between Neilson and Burnet Streets, as well as much of Church and Hiram Streets - was replete with Jewish-owned shops. Here too, for the most part, were the kosher markets to which we shall refer later. This was the section where a majority of the Jewish families settled when they arrived in the area. Although there are no figures for the early part of the century, it is known that by 1943, when many Jews had already relocated in other areas of New Brunswick and in the suburbs, 38% of the Jewish population was still living within Ward 2.[5]

There were other reasons why Jewish immigrants were attracted to the Raritan Valley area. Sometimes the attraction was direct and simple. A relative, friend, or even vague acquaintance from the town in Europe beckoned them here with an offer of a temporary bed or two in the corner of the living room, or a chance to work, or a prepaid passage. Israel Laurie was one of these benefactors. He had arrived in Somerville in 1893, become a successful peddler and moved to New Brunswick in 1907 to open a scrap yard. Three interviews revealed that Laurie played an important part in the settling of newcomers to the area. Maurice Belsky told how his father, Joseph, received assistance when he arrived in the community after the turn of the century. Laurie gave him a job and a place to live in the scrap yard office, and permitted Belsky to remain until he had saved enough to purchase his own horse and buggy so that he could earn a living as a fruit and vegetable peddler. This same Laurie was also said to have befriended Philip Watkin soon after he arrived from Russia after the turn of the century. Since Watkin, according to his daughter Ethel Watkin Politziner,



Bears Bros., Clothing

Some New Brunswick Jewish merchants and businesses at turn of the century. (Originals in files of The Home News; scrap yard photo in author's collection.)



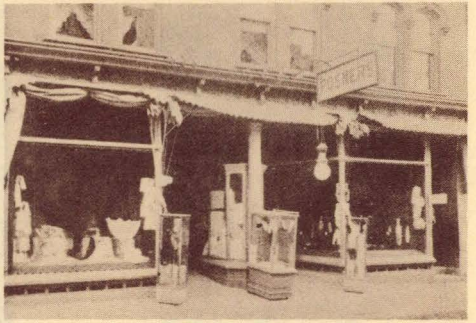
Exterior S. Spitz



Marks Bros., Dry Goods



M. Lewine, Milliner



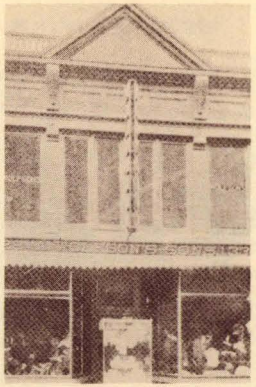
I. Posner's Sons, Dry Goods



Interior H. Landsberg Dry Goods Store



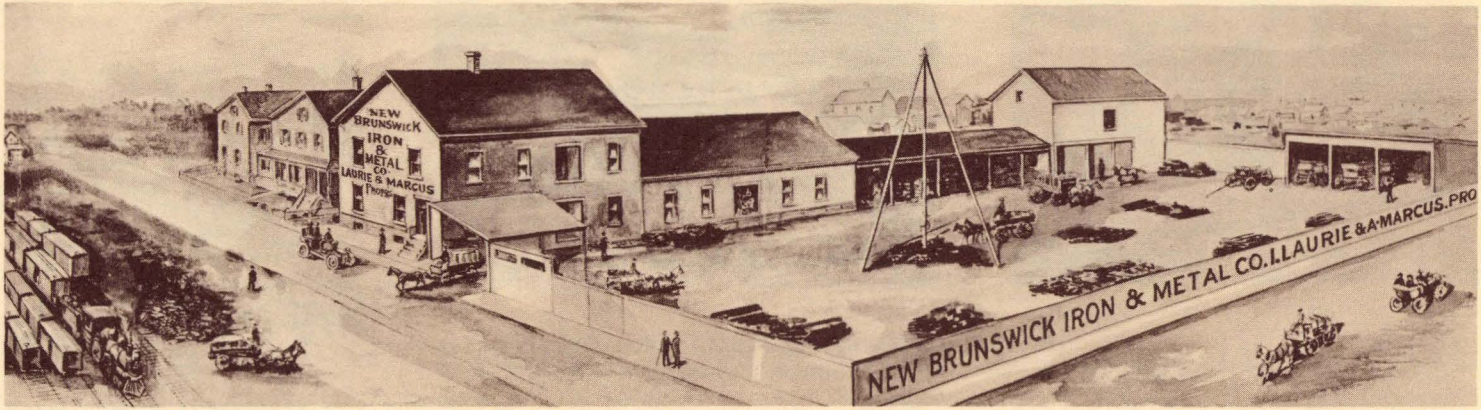
M. Schwartzman, Furrier



A. Wolfson's Sons, Clothing



Globe Furniture Company



New Brunswick Iron & Metal Co.

in addition to serving as part-time cantor at Poile Zedek synagogue, needed help to support his family, Laurie took him under his wing and taught him the rudiments of peddling scrap. Rose Kaplan Haritan reported that Laurie sent her mother Dora Rosenberg (Kaplan), a *landsman* (member of the same community) from Vilna, a steamship ticket for America. Similar stories undoubtedly were repeated many times about other generous and compassionate families already comfortably settled here.

The rural districts in the outlying areas of the Raritan Valley appealed to some of the immigrants as well, and many came here to take up farming. As an example, Abe Dobin described in his autobiography *Fertile Fields* how his parents, after a few years of suffering the congestion and the hectic pace of the Lower East Side, as well as the intolerable working conditions of the sweatshops, decided in 1909 to pool their resources with those of some cousins and purchase a farm in the Pigeon Swamp area in Dayton. There in the beginning they subsisted on their own vegetable gardening, and sold eggs and milk on the market.[6] Another farming family was that of Mendel Kornblatt, near Metuchen, who hosted Selman Waksman in 1910, when he first arrived in America, and gave him his first experiences in rural living.[7] Many Jewish farmers eventually arrived in the area, settling in rural areas in South Brunswick, Piscataway, North Brunswick, Stelton, and East Brunswick. Several persons interviewed referred to area realtor Reubin Salkin as being particularly helpful in expediting their purchase of rural property. The farmers were also aided in their settlement and business enterprise by both the Jewish Agricultural Society (where Abe Dobin served as Education extension agent) and by the Central Jersey Farmer's Cooperative (which extended beyond the limits of the Raritan Valley.)[8]

Ideal conditions for manufacturing, such as available labor and access to New York markets, were also an attraction for some Jewish settlers. Many of the earlier German settlers had become successful manufacturers. The Lederer family has already been referred to as opening a tannery in 1861. Next, William Hahn opened the Milltown Manufacturing Co. in 1904 where he processed fish oil used to soften leather. (Hahn had married the daughter of Adolph Eugene Heupsh, one of the earliest rabbis to be ordained in the United States. Rabbi Heupsh came from his pulpit at the Central Synagogue in New York to be a guest preacher in the Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in 1913.)

A leather processing plant was established by Louis Lefkowitz and Brother in 1905. A rubber reclaiming plant was set up by the Laurie and Marcus families in Millstone by 1910.

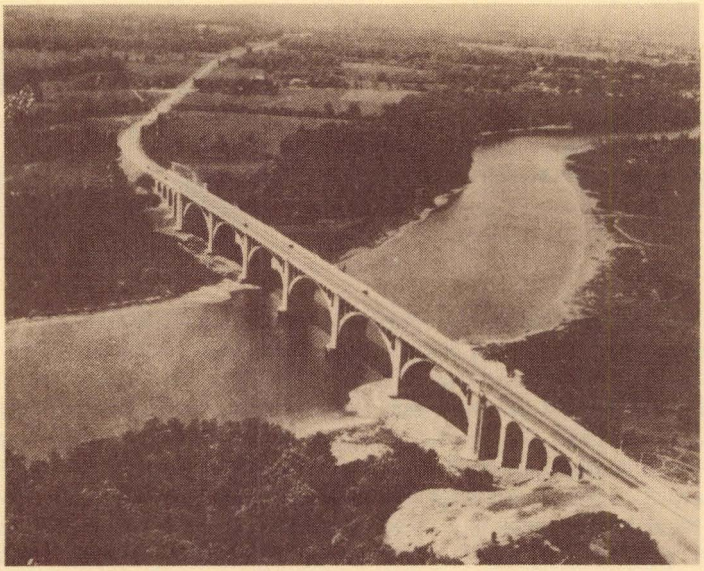
The needle trade was popular among Raritan Valley Jews too. In New Brunswick the 1927 Chamber of Commerce reported that Abraham Wolf and Co. had been in business for 33 years manufacturing mens and boys suits and overcoats.[9] (It cannot be ascertained, however, whether its establishment in 1894 took place in New Brunswick.) In 1921 Barney Rubin established Aplo Clothing on Redmond Street. The company grew and with additional partners, it later moved to Remsen Avenue where it was renamed Bond Clothes. This was to become an important New Brunswick industry providing jobs for thousands of new immigrants.

South River, too, became a center for the needle industry. It began to attract textile manufacturers as early as 1877, and by 1882 the name of Hermann, a Jewish family, was associated with a handkerchief factory here.[10] Although we cannot be certain of a relationship to this same Hermann family, an article in the *Daily Times* in 1897 referred to a shirt factory of Bernheim, Dreyfuss, and Hermann as being on strike, and called it "one of the most important industries in Spotswood."[11] In 1917 Harry Dubrowsky was sent to South River from New York to set up a contract dress manufacturing company. Within a short time he and William Hindes purchased the company, renaming it the S.R. Waist and Dress Co. By the early 1920s many other Jews working in the strike-torn New York garment district saw South River as an ideal area to set up their own manufacturing plants. "It took only a small investment to set up a business...rent space and (buy) some second-hand sewing machines and you were in business," reminisced Jack Habacht.[12] Later these contract manufacturers of dresses and blouses were to be plagued by union problems and violence in the organizing process. By 1933 the International Ladies Garment Workers had succeeded in unionizing the workers, but these businesses nevertheless managed to flourish.

Not only did Jewish families come in to the area to establish manufacturing plants, but many of them were brought into the area by non-Jewish industrial plants. For example Jesse Strauss, a German Jew, had been an office clerk in New York at the General Cigar Company, when in 1907 he was sent to New Brunswick to supervise the three area plants. In addition skilled hands were always sought. Samuel Patt, a trimmer in New York, was brought to the Aplo Clothing Company in 1921. Abe "Daddy" Silver was also brought in from Rochester, N.Y. to work for Aplo. Many of the Sephardic Jews who had first arrived in Raritan, N.J. moved to New Brunswick to take jobs at Johnson and Johnson in the early 1920s.

There were further interests in the area. New Brunswick was the county seat, and as such attracted a number of professionals and civic servants. The earliest Jewish lawyers known to have practiced here were Samuel Schleimer (first mentioned in local records in 1903) and George Plechner (first mentioned in 1909).[13] Philip M. Brenner was the first local Jew to be elevated to the bench, serving as a County judge from 1941 to 1946. Samuel Hoffman was to have the distinction of being the only Jew to be elected to the City Commission of New Brunswick, having served between 1935 and 1939. In 1923 the only Jewish woman to run for public office in New Brunswick, albeit unsuccessfully, was Sophie Wolfe who made a bid for City Commissioner. She ran on the platform of "lower water rates, equal rights, a clean city and an efficient poor department." She had been the first county committeewoman in 1918 for the Republican Party, and was said to have been the first woman in the entire State to run for public office.[14]

Also prominent on the local level of city affairs were five Jews who served on the Board of Education. In New Brunswick Aaron Wolfson was a member of this Board somewhere between 1874 and 1899; Solomon Slonim was a member of this Board in the mid 1920s; Jesse Strauss was a member in



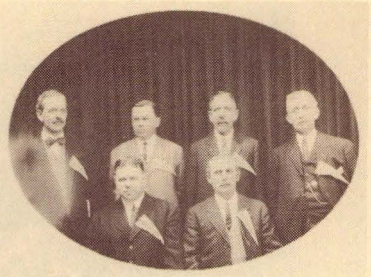
Morris Goodkind Bridge over Raritan River was considered a marvel of design and foresight when built in 1929.

1929; Dr. Jacob G. Lipman from 1931-37, and Philip M. Brenner was appointed in 1948. In Highland Park, Abram Friedberg served several years on the Board of Education.

In 1908, New Brunswick records list as members of the local fire companies Meyer Fertig, Aaron Koplen, Harry Marks, and Morris Bauer. An unusual achievement for a Jewish citizen in civic endeavor was the election of Harry Singer as Firechief of the Highland Park Voluntary Firemen's Association in the early 1920s, a position he held for many years.

On the County level, Theodore Cohn, a custom tailor and the Elks treasurer for many terms, was appointed in 1913 to complete the term of a County Freeholder who left to become the postmaster. Cohn stood for election the following year unsuccessfully. In 1927 the County listed Joseph Fertig and Nathan Robins as Sealers of Weights and Measures, and Louis J. Belloff as Superintendent of Bridges.

Local Jews made their mark on the State level too. Morris Goodkind ("Goody") entered State service in 1922 as general supervisor of bridge maintenance, and by 1925 he was appointed State Bridge Engineer, a position he held at the conclusion of this book's coverage in 1948. During World War II he was a consultant to the Chief Engineer of the U.S. Army. His bridge designs won many awards, but the most important was the span he designed over the Raritan River in New Brunswick, awarded first prize in 1930 as "The most beautiful engineering structure erected anywhere that year."[16] Also prominent in State affairs for many years was Abraham Jelin, the State Highway Commissioner in the late 1920s. Lastly, after serving as City Commissioner, Sam Hoffman was appointed to the State Board of local governments by three governors commencing in 1938.



New Brunswick Board of Trade, circa 1910, included Henry Landsberg (lower right) and Israel Laurie (top, 3rd from left)

There was yet another reason why this area was an attractive one. It was a college town, encompassing Rutgers and New Jersey College for Women (Douglass) within its boundaries since 1776 and 1918 respectively. The earliest known Jewish graduate was Samuel Judah who received his A.B. from Rutgers in 1816. He was born in New York and following his graduation moved to Indiana to study law. It is thought likely that he was the son of Bernard S. Judah who lived in New Brunswick at the time. By 1888 another local Jewish resident, Joseph Wolfson - son of Aaron and Augusta Wolfson, graduated Rutgers and went on to Medical school, eventually becoming the city physician of Jersey City. By 1895 George Plechner graduated Rutgers and sometime later opened a law practice in New Brunswick.

There were others who came to the area expressly to attend the college, and then elected to remain here as permanent residents. The first of these was Jacob G. Lipman who had grown up at the Woodbine Colony, a farm settlement in south Jersey set up by the philanthropist Baron de Hirsh. Because of his exceptional aptitude in school, Lipman was selected with one other student Jacob Kotinsky, to receive special intensified instruction so that they might become teachers and farm experts. They both won State scholarships to Rutgers and graduated from the college in 1898. Lipman returned to study soil bacteria in 1901 and to receive his PhD in 1903. By 1911 he was serving as Dean of the School of Agriculture, the first Jew to reach this distinguished administrative position.

Rutgers was the reason, too, why Selman Waksman who was to be the eventual Nobel prize winner for his discovery of streptomycin, came to the area. He came from Russia in 1910, and lived and worked at his cousin's farm in Metuchen until he had saved enough money to enter a university. It was Dr. Lipman who advised him to enter Rutgers to study an agricultural curriculum, rather than to go to Columbia to study medicine. He was granted a scholarship and lived in an old farmhouse on College Farm grounds. He wrote in his autobiography, "A new life thus began for me. The environment was ideal. I earned enough to live modestly and to continue my studies uninterruptedly. Most important, I could use my spare time as I liked....The best remuneration....came from teaching English to various foreigners living in New Brunswick or from preparing an occasional student for his college entrance examinations....All these sources of income made it possible for me to pay all my college expenses..." [18]

The presence of the women's college, N.J.C., also made it possible for

local Jewish women to continue their education right here in the community. The first one to take advantage of it was Cecilia Lipman, wife of Dr. Jacob G. Lipman. Although she already had a degree from Hunter College, and three young children, she decided to enroll in the first class at N.J.C. in 1918, and in 1922 she graduated with honors. [19] Gertrude Posner (Slonim) was the first daughter of one of the local families to enter the college, graduating in 1925.

Still another attraction to the Raritan Valley was the quality of health care in the area, and the opportunities it provided for education and practice. Middlesex General Hospital had been open since 1885 and Saint Peter's Medical Center opened in 1907. Both pre-medical and pharmaceutical education were available at Rutgers University.

One Jewish native son - Hugo Blum - did practice medicine in New Brunswick, at least from 1909-1910 (perhaps earlier, as he was born in 1865), but he is thought to have practiced in New York in his later years. Dr. William Klein came in shortly after Blum left, and was the first Jew to practice here permanently. In South River, Dr. Abraham Pansy was the first to open a medical practice in 1921, after some years of practice in Newark.

The earliest Jewish dentist in New Brunswick was Dr. Joseph Snow who is thought to have opened his practice soon after 1910. Dr. Julius Kahn, after practicing in the seashore area since 1903, moved to Highland Park and opened his practice in 1918, and served as the school dentist for over thirty years.

Pharmacies were important medical facilities as well, for often as not many treatments were prescribed in those days by pharmacists. Alexander Greussner was the first practicing Jewish pharmacist in the area in 1911. By 1915 Harry Rothenberg had opened a pharmacy in South River.

Needless to say, many other Jewish doctors, dentists, and pharmacists followed these earliest examples. The citizens of the Raritan Valley area were very supportive of good medical care.

The excellent public school system was just one more reason to attract newcomers at the turn of the century. The earliest known Jewish teachers in the area were Carolyn (Carrie) Plechner and Edith Solomon (Hoffman) who taught in the elementary schools in New Brunswick as early as 1902, both having attended Normal School in Trenton. In 1908 Harry S. Feller was teaching mathematics and German at the High School level, following his graduation from Rutgers as a Phi Beta Kappa. Later he was to be appointed the first principal of the Night School for the education of new Americans - the first Jew to reach an administrative position in the public school system in the area. Another public school faculty member to reach an unusual level was Max Pecker who was Music Director of the public schools and who conducted the N.B.H.S. orchestra for many years as well as the N.B. Civic Symphony.

Both the University and the local industry attracted many Jewish scientists to the community. As early as 1897, *The Daily Times* reported on a local young inventor, Myron Wolfson (son of Aaron) who patented an

interesting device to protect the fingers when using musilage. It was known as the "Oozer Musilage Bottle Cap."[20] Making a greater impact on the science world however, were four men residing locally who were listed in an Encyclopedia of American Jews in 1935. The list included Dr. Lipman, who was mentioned earlier in this Chapter as being the Dean of the School of Agriculture at Rutgers. In addition to this, however, he also directed the Jewish Agricultural Society between 1914-1939, and in this position in 1929 visited Palestine to study the agricultural possibilities and opportunities for Jewish immigrants.[21] Dr. Selman Waksman, described earlier, was also on this list, as were Reuben Blumenthal, a research physiologist and chemist at Squibbs, and Dr. Jacob S. Joffe, Associate Professor of Soils at Rutgers College of Agriculture.[22]

Perhaps one of the most obvious reasons attracting Jews to an area was the availability of kosher food products, so those who desired could maintain their orthodox traditions. Many such commercial enterprises were available to them in the Raritan Valley.

A good number of the Jewish families who had started out as food peddlers, gradually opened their own stores or wholesale markets. Most of these establishments dotted the "downtown" area of New Brunswick, where they had to cope with the periodic "freshets" caused by the overflow of the Raritan River.

Some of these markets were strictly kosher and catered to the Jewish trade almost exclusively. Since each of them helped to enhance Jewish life in the area, an attempt will be made to alphabetically list all that have come to the author's attention, since their order of establishment is not now known. Grocery stores, many of which carried fresh fish as well, included those of Barenfield, Bass, Bolber, Leon Gittleman, Grossman, Gross, Hornstein, Ben Karshmer, Leon, Leo, Paris Grocery, Rosen, Rovin, Z & Z (Eva Berkowitz) - all in New Brunswick. In Highland Park there was the Maryland Farms and Weiss' Fishmarket, and in South River there was Golden's Delicatessen. There were also small delicatessens such as Eppes Essin and Hariton's (affectionately remembered as "Hariton on the Raritan"). There were also live poultry markets owned by L. Greenberg, Adolph Newman and Rosenberg. Kosher butchers in New Brunswick included Boro, Sidney Heite, Henn, Benjamin Schatzman, Boruch Schatzman, Jacob Schatzman, Hyman Siegel, Yeshea Teretsky, and Yosbin. In Highland Park there was Goldberg's Kosher butcher shop, and



Yosbins Butcher Shop, one of many which dotted the downtown section of New Brunswick.

in South River there was Hymie Nisonoff's and Hirsch's Kosher butcher shops.

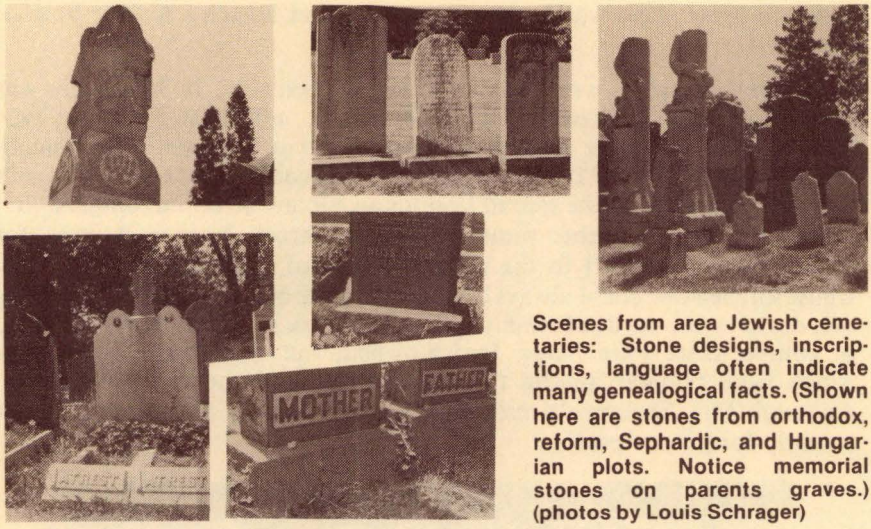
Kosher restaurants were only occasionally available. In 1922 there was mention of Sushel's Private Kosher Restaurant on Neilson Street. In 1924 Murray Roth's Kosher Restaurant and Deli was advertised on Church Street. Then during the 1930s many interviewed could recall eating in Levy's Kosher Restaurant on the second floor of an Albany Street building. A Mrs. Rubin also served kosher meals on Burnet Street. Kosher catering for private parties was left in the capable hands of Lena Zabolinsky, from whose kitchen one could always catch a waft of aromatic *gefilte fish* cooling off, or the sweet smells of freshly made *taiglach* or *mandelbrot*. In addition, of course, there were many Jewish-owned, but non-kosher restaurants which were popular among the townspeople and the college students. Although Mrs. Stollman's restaurant was not kosher, she catered kosher cooking for private parties.



Joseph Belsky (white apron) in his grocery store in 1935 on Jersey Avenue, built up from his early days as a produce peddler.



The Paris Grocery Company, with its sign in Ladino, spilled over onto the sidewalk with its unusual display of fruits and vegetables. L. to r. are Albert Naar, Isaac Beja, (unknown woman), Solomon Naar, and Daniel Handaly.



Scenes from area Jewish cemetaries: Stone designs, inscriptions, language often indicate many genealogical facts. (Shown here are stones from orthodox, reform, Sephardic, and Hungarian plots. Notice memorial stones on parents graves.) (photos by Louis Schrager)

The blatant anti-semitism, which had plagued Jews throughout Europe, did not seem to have been a major factor in the everyday lives of the Jewish community in the Raritan Valley area. As we have seen, a number of Jews had risen to prominence during each historic period we have discussed. This is not to say, however, that the Jews felt no restraints in their aspirations. Private schools in the area in the early part of the century had few, if any, Jewish students. Colleges seemed to have de facto quota restrictions on some ethnic groups. Some administrative positions in the top industries and in the banking circles had few Jewish personnel. For the most part, however, Jews felt comfortable here, and were welcomed in most circles. Only on rare occasions did overt anti-semitism rear its ugly head.

The first known example was somewhere between 1906-1910 when the story is told of a young Jewish boy about the age of twelve being attacked by a gang on the steps of one of the synagogues (most likely Poile Zedek) and pummeled to death. The story was withheld by the authorities, apparently not wishing to have further disturbances created, but a group of Jewish citizens who were not satisfied that everything was being done to catch the perpetrators, prodded the investigators into a more intensified search until the criminals were finally caught and brought to justice.

There was, of course, occasional vandalism which represented no more than the work of a small group of bigots. On the whole, it must be said that the Raritan Valley communities were quite hospitable to their Jewish citizens, and gave them ample opportunities to live peacefully and productively in the area.

The last major factor, and possibly the most important one responsible for attracting the East European Jews to the area, was the availability of a variety of synagogues, Hebrew schools, and many social services permitting Jews to continue the religous and cultural life to which they were accustomed. All of these will be reviewed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONGREGATIONS

"And they shall build for me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among among them." .... Exodus 25:8

"Israel lives by its congregations." .... Isaac Mayer Wise

The development of congregational units within a Jewish community has been an essential element in the survival of Judaism. The process of synagogal development and congregational unity began almost as soon as the Israelites were taken captive into Babylonia following the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. The preservation of their Judaic ideals through the centuries can, to a great extent, be attributed to the development of these congregational centers. Here is where Jews would gather for prayer, for study, for fellowship.

Although there are records of Jewish settlers in the Raritan Valley area dating back to 1698, it is not certain that there was a formalization of any congregation until 1859. Excavations in Bound Brook in 1840, in the area where the Louzada family may have lived a century or so before, turned up a shofar, a ritual slaughtering knife, and traces of a cemetery, indicating the possible existence of a congregation there, but this remains only conjecture.[1]

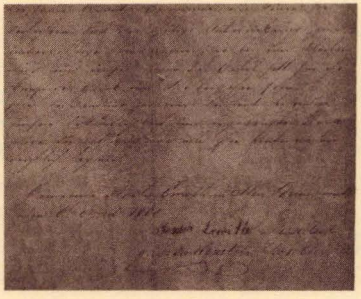
It is known, however, that by 1855 Jews banded together as Jews, for there was a statement in the county records that "The Hebrew Benevolent Society of New Brunswick" purchased property and founded a cemetery.[2] This Society is believed to have provided aid to the poor and to have served as a *Chevra Kadisha* (a group of pious men and women who prepared the dead for burial according to proper Jewish tradition). At the same time, Jews were meeting in private homes for prayer. Sometimes itinerent rabbis would come through the town to serve them. For the celebration of important religious occasions some Jews would travel by steamboat to New York.

Several nearby communities had formally organized congregations, and this fact must have come to the attention of the New Brunswick Jews. The Jews in Newark had formed B'nai Jeshurun in 1848.[3] In Paterson, at almost the same time, Jews who were part of the silk manufacturing center had organized.[4] In Elizabeth, in 1857, a small group of Jews were known to be meeting for worship.[5] And shortly after that Trenton Jews banded together as the Har Sinai congregation. Thus it must have seemed appropriate to a number of New Brunswick Jews, who were mostly of Bohemian and German ancestry, to do likewise.

Apparently this was not a unanimous decision because some of the "older Jewish residents" were grieved at not having been consulted, and later had to be mollified.[6] In any event, the organizers authorized six of their group to apply for a charter in the Court of Common Pleas of Middlesex County in the name of "Anshe Emeth Congregation". This was granted on October 11, 1859. The six men signing the charter were Joseph Levitt, Joseph Biron, J.J. Frankenstein, William B. Plechner, Meyer Seckle, and Elias Frankenstein. Later they selected Levitt as President, Ignatz Frankenstein as Secretary, and Aaron Wolfson as Treasurer. The group met in a hall at 9 Peace Street (thought to have been Wolfson's clothing store) until 1871, when it moved to larger quarters on Neilson Street. Knowledgeable readers led the services, occasionally assisted by rabbis traveling through the area. Rev. Isaac Shicklin, who was the earliest one mentioned, appeared as a reader in 1861, 1881, and performed a wedding in 1892. Others mentioned in the records included H. Bernstein in 1865, G. Newmark in 1872, Simon Altman in 1877, Solomon Bergman in 1883, and M. Malinosky in 1886-88. In 1899 Morris W. Waldman was elected the first full time rabbi.

One month after receiving its charter in 1859 the leaders of Anshe Emeth wrote a letter to a number of European synagogues appealing for a Torah. Within a few months they received a reply from the Alte-Nue Synagogue in Prague, Czechoslovakia advising them that a Sefer Torah would be on its way "as soon as the new mantle is finished."[7] By April 1860 the fledgling congregation received its treasured gift, and the secretary penned a two page letter to Ernest Wehly, president of the Prague congregation, ecstatically informing him that the reading of the new Torah had begun that very week:

> *"Our reception of the Torah was, for us, like the moment that our people received the holy covenant at Mount Sinai. It was a sacred moment for our congregation and one full of awe. Our eyes were raised up to heaven and we called out, 'As our hearts are filled with the fear of God on this day, so may it be all the days of our lives upon the earth.*
>
> *We are small, yet we also appear to possess another precious gift from you. Through your noble actions you have won for yourself, not only with us, but also with our children's children, an unforgettable name. As often as we look upon this Sefer Torah, so often will your deed appear before our eyes.*
>
> *May the Almighty abundantly bless all your undertakings."*[8]



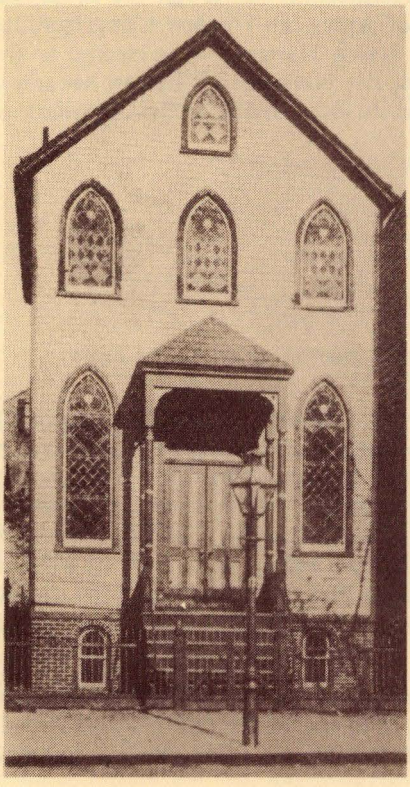
Concluding lines and signature of 1860 letter to Prague. (Anshe Emeth Archives)

By September of 1860, it was recorded that all of the Jews in the community had been "gathered in one fold and elected new officers who apparently satisfied everyone."[9]

In 1871 Anshe Emeth leaders made a public appeal to American Jewry through a newspaper called *The Israelite,* to help them furnish their synagogue. This building was situated somewhere on Neilson Street. The leaders spoke of it as a building "lacking all necessary decorations".[10] A personal endorsement of this appeal was made by Dr. Isaac M. Wise.

In 1873 Anshe Emeth was referred to in a directory listing of New Brunswick religious organizations as "one Israelitish church." In the same year the congregation purchased its burial grounds in Elmwood Cemetery, and records indicated that a number of bodies from other cemeteries were reinterred there. The earliest legible tombstone in this cemetery marks the grave of Ernestine Meyer, recorded as the wife of Isaac Arnheim, who was born in Thore, Prussia, and who died in 1868.

By 1887 the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (an umbrella organization formed in 1859 to protect Jewish rights) issued statistics which included the value of real estate owned by Anshe Emeth amounting to $2500, not including burial grounds, and the value of other property valued at $500. The following year the Board of Delegates listed nineteen seat-



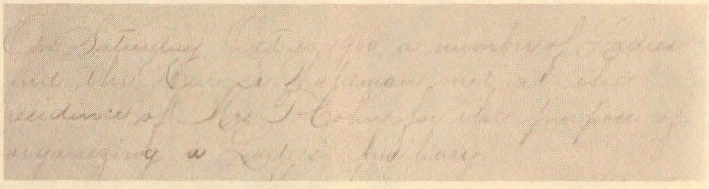


First permanent home of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple on Albany Street built in 1897 and in use until 1931. Interior and Exterior views.

holders for Anshe Emeth in its statistics.[11] A year later in 1889, there is a notation in a local history book mentioning that New Brunswick has one synagogue - "Anshe Emett the Jewish Society" - which has "a modest meeting place" on Liberty Street.[12]

Anshe Emeth constructed a new synagogue building in 1897, located on Albany Street between Neilson and Water Streets, and convenient to the area where most Jews then lived. The Salvation Army was its next door neighbor, and several old timers including Rosella Hanauer[13] and Nathan Aaron[14] recalled the competition with the singing and drumbeating of the Army during the Friday evening services. Here we find the first indication that the congregants were practicing a liberal Judaism, for there was an organ in the synagogue, and there was no separate section for women. In addition, in 1904 on Yom Kippur soloist Edith Solomon (Hoffman) recalled singing *Kol Nidre* in English rather than the traditional Hebrew. Undoubtedly there were tendencies towards Reform practices prior to this, as evidenced by the growing disunity within the local Jewish population, and the subsequent establishment of an orthodox congregation.

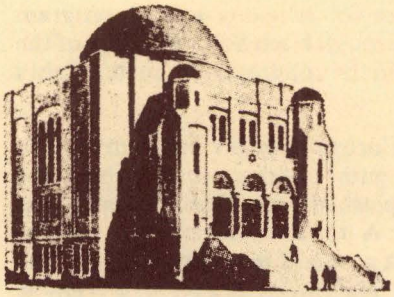
Under Rabbi Waldman's leadership the Ladies Auxiliary of Anshe Emeth was formed in 1900. A group of women met on October 20th "in the parlors of Mrs. Theodore Cohn"[15] to discuss the formation of this group. Henrietta Lederer, married three years earlier to the son of one of the Temple's founders, was elected President. For a brief period the women's group associated with their National counterpart (although the congregation did not officially join the Union of American Hebrew Congregations until 1950), and one of their number, Haida Hanauer, was elected to the National board for two terms. In 1924, the National affiliation became a permanent one, and the group changed its name from Ladies Auxiliary to Sisterhood.



First lines in minutes of organizational meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary at Anshe Emeth, October 1900.

Among the first purchases made by the Auxiliary in 1900 were an organ and candlabrum for the pulpit. The women's efforts consisted mainly of fundraising, caring for the 'Sabbath School', providing food on occasion, and giving picnics and parties for the children. Within a year, the women offered their meager funds to augment the rabbi's salary, and by contributing twenty dollars a month, raised his annual salary from $300 to $750. A few years later, they were forced to reduce their contribution to ten dollars monthly, leaving it to the men to make up the difference. The men, it was recorded, paid annual dues of twenty four dollars.

Rabbi Waldman left three years later to become the secretary of the American Jewish Committee, and was followed to the pulpit by Rabbis E. Friedlander (1903-4), Gustave N. Hausman (1905), Veld (1907), Solomon



New Anshe Emeth building completed in 1930.

(1909), J. Ludwig Stern (1910), Ludwig Roeder (1913), Dr. Jacob Goldstein (1921), Rev. Hyman Schatz (1921-22), Dr. J. Sarachek (1925), and Arthur Maurice Hirshberg (1927).

The 1927 minutes recorded that Rabbi Hirshberg was warmly welcomed by the general community of New Brunswick, and invited to deliver the Thanksgiving sermon at the First Presbyterian Church. He brought musician Isabel Brylawski to assist in the interfaith program.

In 1929, with a membership of about eighty and dues of sixty dollars per family, Anshe Emeth began to plan for a new edifice to be built on Livingston Avenue. Not only was the old synagogue too small for the growing congregation, but the roof leaked and the building was drafty. Before the paint was scarcely dry in the new building. Harold Bruskin and Robert Cohn had their long delayed Bar Mitzvah ceremonies.

By the time the new temple was officially dedicated and renamed Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple the depression had hit the country, and the congregation was beset by many financial problems. The three day Dedication festivities in June 1930, at least, were not to be dimmed. Among the guest speakers were Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of New York, Rabbi Victor Eppstein of Cuba, Rabbi Samuel Hirshberg of Wisconsin, Rev. Milton J. Hoffman of the Rutgers Theological Seminary, and the Hon. Peter F. Daly, Justice of the Supreme Court. The choir was directed by organist Essie Gruessner, and included the voices of Clara Milch, Edith Strauss, Mae Strauss, David Szerlip, Eric V. Goodwin, and Edith Klein. At the special dedicatory services for the young people on Sabbath morning, Lemuel Strauss celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. Dorothy Strauss (Heines) at age eleven composed the dedicatory psalm, which included this poignant verse:

"Thou art all God's humble servants,
He hath harkened unto thy prayers.
To HIM we dedicate our lovely temple,
Forsooth we have gained upon hardships stairs."[16]

By 1931 in the depths of the depression, Rabbi Nathaniel M. Keller, newly graduated from the Jewish Institute of Religion, was elected to serve Anshe Emeth for three thousand dollars a year. Three years later he faced a cut in that seemingly modest sum, but he endured that problem, and many others. He was not only the spiritual leader of this Congregation through the years covered by this history, but for most of these years was the 'senior' rabbi of the community. During his tenure with the congregation, the mem-

bership steadily rose, and a highly successful religious school program developed, which ran from Kindergarten through High School. Many of the Temple's affiliated groups were organized in the congregation during Rabbi Keller's years.

The growth of the Nazi movement in Europe brought problems to the congregation. One morning in 1934 after guest speakers talked about the rise of Hitlerism, the Temple was found splashed with "Heil Hitler" signs in red paint and swastikas on the steps. A reward was offered for the capture of the perpetrators and eventually a group of teenagers admitted the crime, but claimed it was only a belated Halloween prank. The Temple agreed to accept this explanation, rather than escalate the affair.

In 1938 the congregation received a letter from Dr. Simon Adler, the Archivist of the Jewish community of Prague - the group which had been the original benefactor of Anshe Emeth - requesting affidavits for their citizens so they could escape the impending holocaust and come to America. The letter read:

> *"The press has certainly informed you of the plight of your co-religionists in Bohemia. Most of them are trying to prepare for emigration, as they see no alternative open to them which offers any future for their children. Many however, have no prospect of being able to emigrate without assistance. I therefore beg you most earnestly to assist our Bohemian Jews by sending them a number of affidavits, however few, from members of your congregation. If you will, let me know the number of affidavits you can furnish. I will send you at once a list of the most deserving and necessitous cases."*[17]

Although there is no record of the action taken on this request (all ledgers for this period are missing) leaders of the congregation reported that a number of affidavits were sent, apparently to no avail.

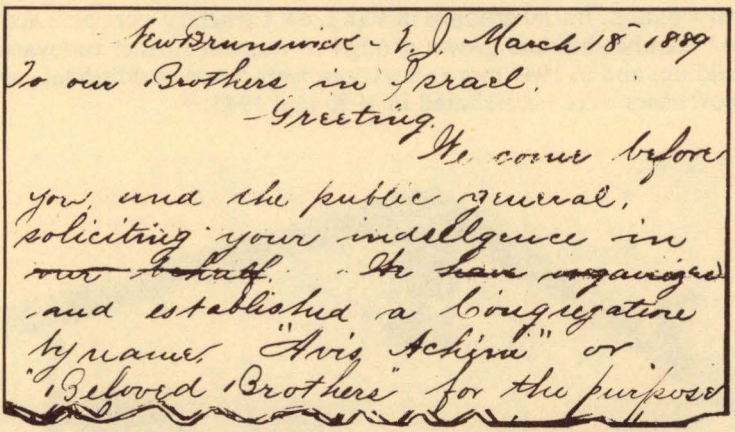
During the forties the congregation had grown to one hundred and forty two families. Rabbi Keller spearheaded action on behalf of Zionist causes, and shared in many interfaith activities.



Temple Players of Anshe Emeth present *The Very Idea* in 1919. From l. to r.: David Zerlip, Gussie Haas, Sarah Dreier, Harry Singer, Essie Gruessner, Gus Lang, Rosella Hanauer, Sophie Wolfe, and Dewitt Strauss.

The following men served in the presidency of this Temple until 1948: Joseph Levitt (1859), Aaron Wolfson (1863), Joseph Livingston (1877-78), William B. Plechner (1880-84), Philip Hirsh (1884-87), Simon Cohn (1888), Louis Cohn (1889-1902), William Schlesinger (1902-09), Henry Blum (1909-10), Henry Landsberg (1910), Adolph Hanauer (1910-12), Herman Schwartz (1912-13), Joseph Tepper (1913-18), Jesse Strauss (1918-21), Adolph Hanauer (1921-22), Samuel Salls (1922-25), Morris Fischler (1925-32), Philip M. Brenner (1932-34), Dr. Philip L. Schwartz (1934-36), Adolph Hanauer (1936-38), David D. Deutsch (1938-40), Harold J. Sklarew (1940-42), Samuel G. Cohen (1942-45), Morris Breitkopf (1945-47), and Leo Rifkin (1947-48).

Now it is time to return to the period, prior to the turn of the century, when large numbers of East European immigrants began to arrive in the New Brunswick area. Although in 1877 the Jewish population numbered one hundred and thirty, a year later official Board of Delegates statistics for New Brunswick included one hundred seventy three Jews. By 1897 this figure had jumped to two hundred eighty.[18] Many of these immigrants, coming from more traditional backgrounds, found the single congregation with its liberal practices unacceptable, and began to meet separately for daily worship. The dry goods emporium of Benjamin Levine on Burnet Street was one of the original gathering places. In 1889 representatives of this group sent a letter to the other Jews of the community urging them to support this new orthodox congregation, to be known as Ahavas Achim.


New Brunswick - N.J. March 18th 1889
To our Brothers in Israel.
- Greeting.
We come before
you and the public general,
soliciting your indellgence in
our behalf. We have organized
and established a Congregation
by name "Avis Achim" or
"Beloved Brothers" for the purpose

First appeal for support on behalf of Congregation Ahavas Achim, March 18, 1889.

This letter read as follows:

New Brunswick, N.J. March 18, 1889

To our Brothers. Greetings:

We come before you and the public in general, soliciting your indulgence in our behalf. We have organized and established a Congregation by name "Avis Achim" or "Beloved Brothers" for the purpose of holding services, and giving up prayers to our Almighty G-d, on our Sabbaths and our Holy Holidays and as our members are all of a poor class of Hebrews, we call on you, beseeching your indulgence and trust-

ing that you will aid us as far as your noble and sympathetic hearts may extend and as much as your means will allow.

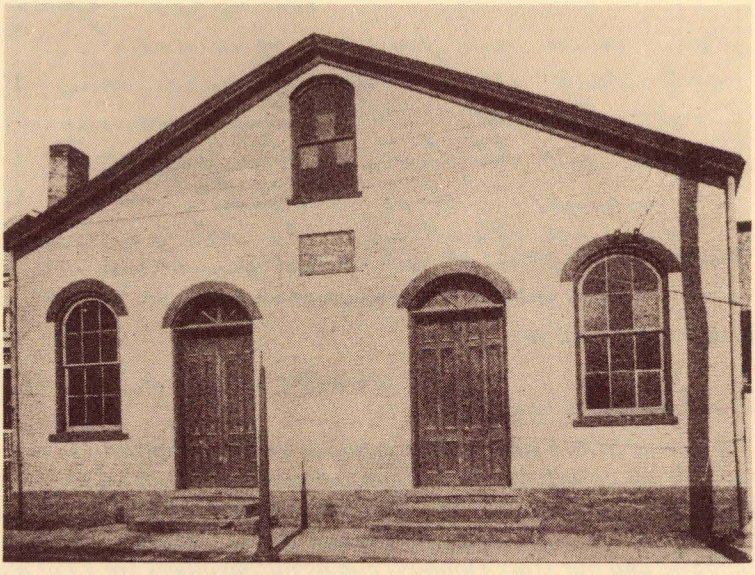
We beg you, our dear Brothers in Israel, to remember that we are all strangers in a strange land, and throw ourselves upon your mercy, and also to remember what is repeated in our Holy Law at least eight times to "Love the stranger as yourself."

Not alone will your genial generosity to us in our need be a very big mitzvah, but also will the name of all our donors be inscribed in our minutes and in our scroll of charter.

Believing and trusting in the open hearted charity of our Brothers in Israel, and doubting not that our appeal for charity will be in vain, and with best wishes for your welfare, we are with respect submitted."[19]

Shortly after the issuance of this letter, the signing of the charter took place. The names inscribed on it included Wolfe Levine, Benjamin Levine, Marks Levine, Abram Levine, Isaac Hendler, Morris Flomenhoft, Hersh Flomenhoft, Meyer Anekstein, Morris Greenberg, Kusiel Greenberg, Y.L. Hendler, Abraham Medinets, A.L. Fertig, Louis Glickman, Morris Martell, George Feller, John Davis, Israel Amder, Morris Adler, Max Levine, and Nathan Cohn. Morris Adler was elected the first President.

For ten years, these orthodox Jews continued to meet for daily and holiday rituals in private homes and rented stores at Schureman and Burnet Streets, and later on Dennis Street. In 1900 they purchased a building on Richmond Street from the Salvation Army, which they remodeled into a place of worship. Burial grounds in Van Liew Cemetery were also acquired. By 1911 membership had grown enough to warrant further renovations to the building, and in 1947 more alterations were made. Additional cemetery land purchases were necessitated in 1920 and 1945.[20]



Original building of Ahavas Achim on Richmond Street, purchased in 1900.

The Daily Times of New Brunswick noted in the February 15, 1897 issue that a Rabbi Bursch performed the wedding ceremony of Ahavas Achim member Abram Ringel to Gussie Stoetzel,[21] but it was likely that this Rabbi was brought in for the occasion. A *Jewish Journal* (Sept. 12, 1975) biography mentioned that Morris Mayerowitz of this congregation and Katie Reisfield were married in April 1898. Records seem to indicate that Ahavas Achim congregation was led by laymen until 1909, when Rabbi Isaac Marcus came from Portland, Maine to occupy the pulpit. One of the congregational leaders, Barnett Hoffman, had met the rabbi in Maine while he was travelling in the area selling fur supplies, and he invited him to make the move. Rabbi Marcus accepted this invitation and remained as spiritual leader at Ahavas Achim for about two decades. In 1918 Rabbi Samuel Baskin, whose wife was related to the Shapiro/Zar families in New Brunswick, was brought in from Salt Lake City to serve several of the then existing orthodox congregations, including Ahavas Achim. Rabbi Baskin served the community with great distinction for more than eleven years. According to the congregants who remembered him, he was an aristocrat in his appearance and always impeccably dressed. Rabbi Baskin eventually became the center of a controversy within the congregation because he approached orthodoxy with a somewhat modern view. In an effort to temper the controversy, congregants Charles and Will Baltin wrote a humorous Yiddish skit entitled "The Rabbi Must Remain". Although it was enjoyed by all, the leaders could not be persuaded to change their attitude. Rabbi Baskin, not willing to compromise his beliefs and sensing a losing battle, resigned from the pulpit in 1930 and became the spiritual leader of a new synagogue in Brooklyn.

For a brief time in 1931, Rabbi M.A. Stern of Richmond, Long Island served Ahavas Achim (and Poile Zedek) until a permanent spiritual leader could be found.

In 1931 Rabbi Abraham Shapiro of Utica, New York arrived amid much fanfare to assume the pulpit of Ahavas Achim. The *Daily Home News* described the event glowingly.[22] The rabbi and his wife were escorted from Utica by several members of that congregation, who later told of the large sendoff he had received there, and of how bereft the Jews of Utica had felt about losing their rabbi. Members of the New Brunswick congregation met the rabbi's party in Rahway and continued the escort down to the synagogue and the United Hebrew School building, all bedecked with American and Jewish flags, and huge excited crowds anxious to hear their new rabbi. His emotional speech concluded with a promise to bring peace and harmony to Jewish ranks; a hope which was soon dashed because of an apparent misunderstanding of the contract with the community leaders. Newspaper accounts revealed that Rabbi Shapiro had been led to believe that he had been hired by a committee representing three orthodox congregations, when in fact he had only been hired by Ahavas Achim.[23] This crushed his hopes of uniting the entire orthodox community, and of course minimized the services he could perform in the community. Gradually the bitterness and rancor caused by this misunderstanding diminished, and Rabbi Shapiro became prominent and respected in the community. In a feature article in the local paper in 1933 he was interviewed about the precarious situation of

the Jews in Germany and he stressed the need for the entire community's support of the protest day of fasting scheduled that week.[24] In November of that year, only two years after his arrival, Rabbi Shapiro contracted pneumonia and died within three days. His sudden death left a void in the community, and the orthodox pulpit was not filled again until 1938 when Rabbi Philip Raymon, a faculty member of the Yeshiva rabbinical school, was elected to serve not only Ahavas Achim, but the two other orthodox congregations on alternate Sabbaths.[25] By 1943 Ahavas Achim numbered one hundred ninety seven families.[26]

As was customary in orthodox congregations several other people served Ahavas Achim in various religious capacities. Chazzonim (cantors) included Rev. Samuel Ratner and Rev. Jacob Charney who served for many years. Rev. Charney's sons often joined him in choral presentations. Morris Widis was sexton for several decades.

Ahavas Achim presidents have included Morris Adler, Michael Jelin, Abraham Jelin, Louis Glickman, Abraham Bears, Marks Lewine, Benjamin Schiff, Theodore Klaus, Hyman Eber, Jacob Lifschitz, Morris Moselowitz, Maxwell J. Hoffman, Max Auster, and David Darwin. A Sisterhood was formed in 1947 electing Anne Sapiro the first President. Reference is made in synagogue publicity of a Ladies Auxiliary preceding this, but no details were uncovered.

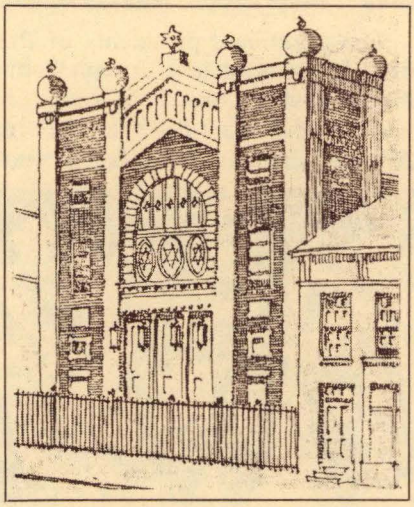


Ahavas Achim cantor, Rev. Samuel Ratner, who served from 1903 to 1922 is shown with his 1918 choir. L. to r.: Herman Moselowitz, Morris Berman, Abe Chaskes, Ratner, Jack Miller, Louis Sapiro and Lewis D. Busch.

Twelve years after the formation of Ahavas Achim a second orthodox congregation known as Poile Zedek was founded on November 18, 1901. Opinions vary as to why this congregation developed. Some old timers recalled that the congregation was composed mostly of fruit and vegetable peddlers. Others remembered it being composed mostly of Austrian immigrants. Still others felt it was a breakaway from the older congregation. It began, however, as a Labor and Sick Benefit Association. A local newspaper article mentioned that Jacob Grossman, who operated a grocery store on Burnet Street was the organizer.[27] Others mentioned as founders included Benjamin Elfant, in whose home the first meeting was held, Joseph Gabowitz and Harry Levin.

In 1908 the congregational leaders convinced Rev. Eli Dobin of New York to move to New Brunswick and render the congregants some of the services vital to their religious life. According to his daughter Dora Jacobs, Rev. Dobin had attended a Yeshiva in Russia and qualified as a rabbi there. For the Poile Zedek congregants, however, he served as their reader, *ba'al tekaih* (shofar blower), *mohel* (circumcisor), and *shoichet* (ritual slaughterer). In 1936, Rev. Dobin went to the synagogue one day and mysteriously disappeared, last seen on the steps of the shule. A group of Jewish citizens, led by Barnett Hoffman, organized a search party to aid the official investigation, and probed into every crevice, cellar, and riverbank area in a frantic attempt to locate Dobin. His body was never found, and the mystery never solved.

Congregational services were held at various times at 27 Hiram Street, 212 Burnet Street, and at the Odd Fellows Building. The present site of the synagogue on Neilson Street was purchased in 1905. The small building on the site was used at first, and then in 1924 the structure that still houses the congregation was built. The early minutes which had been kept in Yiddish, indicated that a Torah was dedicated in 1915. By 1926 the congregation had its first *shammus* (sexton) and Hebrew teacher, Harry Saiff, and its first choir leader, Philip Watkin. George Hamelsky was the first to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in the new building. Rebecca Barnett was the first bride, while



Home of the Poile Zedek Congregation built in 1923.



Cantor Philip Watkin surrounded by his Poile Zedek choir about 1915. From l. to r. are Solomon Watkin, Abe Gordon, Nathan Watkin, the cantor, Harry Handel, Mr. Kagan from New York, and Frank Mayrowitz.

her father was President, in her marriage at the synagogue to Leon Newman.

The cornerstone ceremony for the new $100,000 building was held in 1923, with Samuel Hoffman making the principle address. City Tax Assessor Samuel Hoddeson served as toastmaster, when State Highway Commissioner Abraham Jelin was unable to attend. Soon after this event, the Ladies Auxiliary produced "A Monster Musical Comedy", in an effort to help pay off the large building expenses. By 1943 this congregation numbered one hundred ninety one families.

Enjoying exclusive rabbinical services was apparently out of the financial reach of the early orthodox congregations, so that various arrangements were made from time to time to mutually support a rabbi. In 1918 Poile Zedek shared the services of Rabbi Samuel Baskin with Ahavas Achim. Later the congregation shared the services of Rabbi Anton Klein with Ohav Emeth and he remained with this latter congregation until sometime after 1931. He was assisted by the *chazan* (cantor) Rev. Morris Leibowitz. Nathan Lederman served this synagogue as *shammus* (sexton) and incidentally distinguished himself by becoming father to triplets during the High Holy Days of 1927 - a first in the Jewish community! In 1938 Rabbi Philip Raymon divided his services among the three existing Ashkenazic shules: Poile Zedek, Ahavas Achim, and Ohav Emeth.

Congregational presidents of Poile Zedek have included Jacob Grossman, Rachins Barnett, Joseph Gabowitz, Benjamin Elfant, Samuel Meiner, Harry Levin, Louis Schatzman, Joseph Schwartz, Jack Morrison, and Hyman Katz. First Sisterhood President was Bella Zack, back in the early 20's and she held office for 12 years.



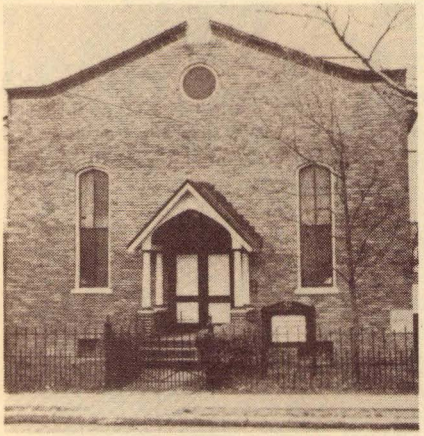
Poile Zedek choir, circa 1924.

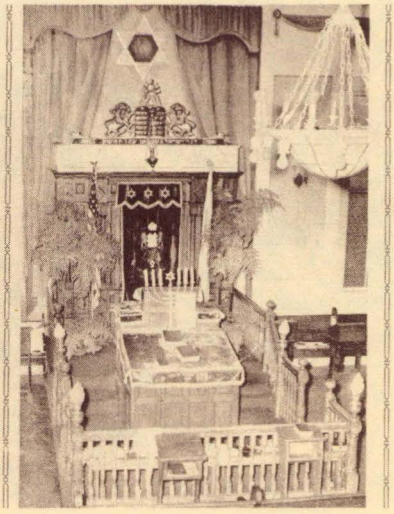


Poile Zedek congregants celebrate an unknown occasion in the early 1920s.

In the adjacent town of South River, another new congregation to be formalized was recorded. Jewish families were known to have resided there as early as 1844 and several of them associated themselves with New Brunswick congregations at the time. South River Jews did not begin meeting for prayer in their own community until 1910. At first they met in the home of Sigmund Davidowitz, then later they rented a hall. They borrowed a Torah from a synagogue in Perth Amboy, until they were able to purchase their own. Then forming the South River Hebrew Benevolent and Sick Association, they purchased property for a cemetery. By 1919 they started a drive to build a synagogue, and before the year was out, their dream was realized. The first major problem they faced was the naming of the synagogue, and after much heated debate on numerous suggestions, they balloted and selected the name of *Anshe Emeth* - Men of Truth. Economic times were difficult and the six dollars dues the first year became so burdensome to the members, that weekly collections of fifty cents had to be made.

Their first elected president was Herman Hollander. Vice President was Harry Goldstein, Recording Secretary Louis Mondschein, Financial Secretary Isadore Friedlander, and Treasurer Samuel Greenfield. Trustees were Morris Aaronoff, Edward Breuer, Sigmund Davidowitz, Herman Hollander, Jacob Rubin, and Joseph Schon. The first full time spiritual leader, Rabbi Samuel Silverman, arrived in 1925. The dedication of the building was highlighted by the appearance of the world famous cantor Joseph Rosenblatt who sang liturgical hymns. Michael Nisonoff, who had been the president of the original South River Hebrew Benefit and Sick Association, was given the honor of unlocking the doors, following the "solemn and joyous" Torah procession up the main street to the new building. In 1930 Rabbi Nisan Heifitz assumed spiritual leadership of the congregation. In 1941 a nearby building was purchased for the Jewish Community Center, which functioned as part of the congregation. It housed the Religious School, and provided meeting space for its affiliate organizations.





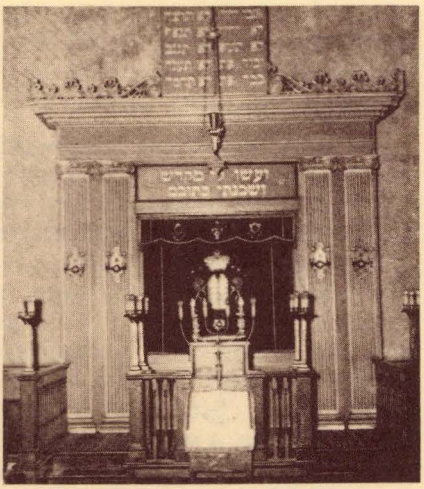
Exterior and interior of South River Congregation Anshe Emeth's first synagogue, built in 1920.

In addition to Herman Hollander (1919-20), other presidents included Samuel Greenfield (1920-30), Frank Siegel (1931-45), Isadore Friedlander (1945-48) and Harry Dubrowsky (1948).[28]

At about the same time South River was formalizing its Jewish group, two additional groups in New Brunswick, brought together by common ethnic backgrounds began to think in terms of forming their own orthodox congregations.

The Hungarian Jews in 1918 were first to feel the need to satisfy their unique spiritual and social needs with an orthodox congregation that "would maintain the customs and traditions of the old country".[29] They selected the name *Ohav Emeth Anshe Ungarn* - Lover of Truth of the Hungarians. They further agreed that Hungarian would be the official language of their meetings and records. This ethnic emphasis was dropped sixteen years later, when the second generation no longer felt it necessary. At the first meeting in 1918 Moritz Katz was elected temporary chairman, and he eventually became the first president, along with Nicholas H. Gross, Vice President; Eugene J. Nagy, Secretary; and Jacob Schwartz, Treasurer. Other charter members included Dr. Harry Berger, Joseph Lukacs, Louis Hartman, Julius Klein, Max Schwartz, Louis Greenwald, Samuel Kraus, Leopold Baumhorn, Joseph Kuhn, Emanuel Freund, Samuel Aron, Alex Benedik, Moritz Klepner, Ignatz Klein, Joseph Lefkowits, Eugene Dicker, Ignatz Weiss, Samuel Mezey, and Moritz Katzender. During the first year the group purchased burial grounds, received the gift of a Torah with great pomp and ceremony, and hired Rev. Anton M. Klein from Philadelphia to conduct prayer services. Rabbi Samuel Baskin of Ahavas Achim, and later Rabbi Philip Raymon, were called upon for special occasions.





Exterior and interior views of Ohav Emeth Synagogue, built in 1927.

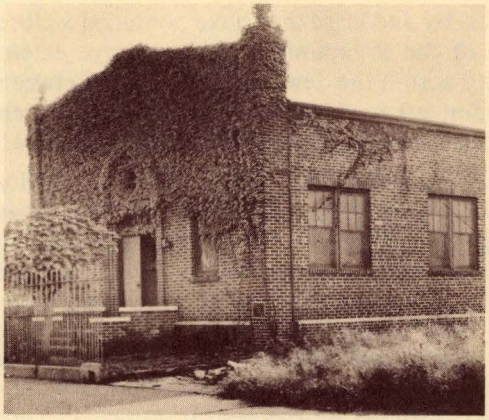


A group of Ohav Emeth leaders in the 1940s. Seated: S. Aaron, E. Vajda, E. Gansfried, A. Schwartz, E. Nagy. Standing: L. Hirsh, J. Sathan, E. Freund, S. Jacobs, M. Isaac, S. Benedik, P. Linker, and S. Juston.

The Hungarian congregation first met at Ahavas Achim, then at the YMHA, and finally dedicated its first synagogue on New Street in 1927. This congregation faced many financial burdens and by 1930 it could no longer retain its full time rabbi. Things were finally eased when the younger generation assumed the leadership after an agreement to drop the ethnic emphasis. By 1943 the congregation had a membership of eighty one families. In 1946 leaders proudly pointed to the fact that seventy five persons had turned out for a Sunday morning *minyan,* and that a regular *minyan* was always available for morning services.

The following men served as Ohav Emeth presidents: Moritz Katz (1919, 1921, 1926, 1932, 1933), Nicholos Gross (1920), Aaron Spielberger (1920, 1924), Louis Hartman (1921), Eugene Nagy (1924), Joseph Lefkowits (1922), Ernest Vajda (1923), Alex Benedik (1924), Jacob Schwartz (1925-26), Carl Berger (1927-30), Joseph Abraham (1930-31), Eugene Gansfried (1934-46) and Alfred Schwartz (1946-48). Lena Schwalb served as the first Auxiliary President in 1921.

By 1926 another unique congregation began to form within the Sephardic community, meeting at first in private homes for prayer. There were many Sephardim from Greece, Turkey, and the Balkan countries who had settled in either Raritan or New Brunswick around 1910. Many found employment at Johnson and Johnson, others were grocery shopkeepers and merchants. Unofficial matriarch of the group was Ricoula Namias, often called the "mother of the colony." A large number of this group united in a Sephardic Brotherhood, an organization which served their special interests and needs. The Brotherhood serving the Raritan Valley area was the second branch of the Brotherhood to be established in the country. Rabbi Benjamin Naar, a *sofer* (scribe) and a student of *kabala* (mysticism), was considered the head of the Brotherhood. He had come from Salonika, Greece in 1924 with his wife and ten children to join two brothers who were already in the community. Solomon Aroun, a local grocer since his arrival from Greece in 1916, was President of this Brotherhood at one time.



Etz Ahaim Synagogue, built in 1929.

By 1926 however, there were some in the Sephardic community who felt the need for a synagogue and a formal congregation. Within a year *Etz Ahaim* received its charter and consisted of eighty member families. Eliyahu Nahama was the first spiritual leader of this congregation, and Yeshiva-trained Elie Saporta, who worked at Johnson and Johnson, voluntarily helped to conduct the services, taking complete charge after Mr. Nahama's death in 1932.[30]

Etz Ahaim built its first synagogue on Richmond Street in 1929. At the cornerstone laying festivities on July 1, 1928, the *Home News* reported that Mayor John Morrison laid the first stone and Rabbi Nissim Behar of New York laid the second stone, as the Building committee, Elie Benozio, Albert Saltiel and Albert Mistriel, looked on with pride. The officers of the congregation were listed as President Elie Benozio, Vice President Albert Mistriel, Secretary Michael Amar, Financial Secretary Samuel Ergas, and Treasurer Albert Saltiel. Trustees were Samuel Algranaty and Solomon Naar, and Commission of Control included Albert Amar, Joseph Mistriel and Isaac Nahama.[31] Shortly after the opening of the building, Ida Namias and Victor Fais became the first to be married in the synagogue.

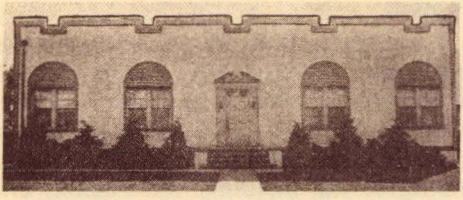
The congregation used Ladino - a Judeo-Spanish dialect - in many of its services and retained some unusual and colorful Sephardic customs. As an example, when a father or older brother was called to the Torah, all the members of the family, both men and women, rose out of respect. Another example occurred during Simchat Torah, when rose water was sprayed on everyone during the Torah processional. Other typical Sephardic features would be Greek dances at the socials, a Greek game called "barbut", and in the earliest days the smoking of waterpipes. Another custom that has been a common practice has been the naming of children after their grandparents, whether they were alive or deceased, as contrasted to the Ashkenazic custom of using only names of deceased forbears.

Presidents serving this congregation after Benozio in 1928 were Jack Pavon, Jack Cohen (1940-45), and Meyer Namias (since 1946). Anna Pavon was named Sisterhood President when it got its start in the 1930's.

Both Etz Ahaim congregation and the Sephardic Brotherhood existed

side by side throughout these years. By and large they have remained a close knit group living in a small area of the community, and to a large extent maintaining their separate identity within the Jewish community. Between 1929 and 1932 a group of Sephardim left for New York, probably in search of better jobs, but many were to return later to the New Brunswick area.

On the other side of the river in Highland Park there was much activity within the growing Jewish community. In 1926 most Highland Park Jews walked to one of the New Brunswick synagogues for worship services. As time passed they found it increasingly inconvenient, particularly with respect to the Jewish education of their children. While walking home from High Holy Day services at a New Brunswick synagogue, A. Harry Freedman, Jacob Willner, Max Cohen and Herman Klein discussed the possibilities of having a Talmud Torah and eventually their own congregation in Highland Park. They called together all the Jewish residents to act upon these ideas. At first they rented a room in the Masonic building and later a store at 10 N. 4th Avenue, and engaged a teacher to instruct the children in Hebrew and Bible. Willner was elected president. Charter members included Bernard Axel, Louis Beck, Abraham H. Davidson, Joseph Federman, A. Harry Freedman, Abram B. Friedberg, Samuel Goldberg, Leopold Holiner, Adolph Kessler, Israel Marcus, David Michelson, Jacob Ratner, Abe Rocker, Louis Rockoff, Joseph Spier, Philip Susswein, Harry Teich, Jacob Willner, Maurice H. Winfield, and Louis Zamost. By February 1927, the women organized a Sisterhood and elected Josephine Winfield president.



Earliest building of Highland Park Conservative Temple, completed 1930 on North Third Avenue.

As the membership grew, so did the interest in forming a congregation, and the Masonic building was rented for High Holy Day services. Three years later the members erected their own building on North Third Avenue, near Montgomery Street. By June 1930 the building was completed and Rabbi Isadore Shalom Ravetch was engaged as their spiritual leader. Within two years Rabbi Ravetch organized the first successful community Seder in Highland Park, which was described by Pearl Teich (Greenfield) in the Temple yearbook: "It was attended by sixty people. Everyone enjoyed himself, even the youngest of the children, despite the fact that some of them fell asleep before the closing of the Seder service!" [32] Rabbi Ravetch was followed by Rabbi Philip Listoken in 1937, and then by Rabbi Sidney Schulman in 1945. Nathan Lazarus served as sexton.

The Third Avenue building soon became inadequate for the growing congregation which listed forty three families by 1943. New building plans were drawn up. In 1948 ground was broken for a new and enlarged Temple and Center on Benner and Third Avenues, on property purchased earlier for this purpose by Harry Kroll, and sold to the congregation at cost.[33]

The lay leadership of the Temple, following Willner's one term in 1930, included A. Harry Freedman (1931), Louis Beck (1932-35), David Michelson (1935-37), Philip Susswein (1937-46), and Abram B. Friedberg (1946-48).

The last group to organize a congregation during the period covered by this history was a number of families who lived on the outskirts of New Brunswick. The group originally called itself The Jewish Farmers Community Center of Middlesex County. It was established on January 24, 1924 in order "to provide and encourage the religious, cultural, social and educational needs of the Jewish community."[34] Prior to that several families, including those of Jacob Segal, Frank Vinocur, and Harry Horlick had joined for High Holy Day services at the home of Lazar Lukacs and discussed the possibility of buying a building in the area to serve as a synagogue for interested families. There were already seventy known Jewish families in the scattered area. The first real organization meeting was held at the home of Louis Rosenfield in North Brunswick, and the following people were elected to office: Jacob Segal, President, Samuel Beck, Treasurer, Samuel Dorfman, Secretary, and elected Trustees were Samuel Adler, Harry Horlick, Irving Mason, Herman Monhait, Mrs. Frank Weintraub, and Abraham Dobin.

One of the first events was a Chanukah party attended by one hundred people. On January 24, 1942 at the White Rose Inn owned by member Morris Rothbart, a congregation was actually organized, and a constitution adopted. Arrangements were made to purchase a cemetery plot and fund-raising events were planned to make it possible to build their synagogue. By the following High Holy Days, services were held in their unfinished building, on rented chairs, lit with a 250 watt bulb attached by an extension cord to the nearest home! Laymen who led the services included Simon Schultz, Louis Stabsky, Frank Vinocur, Morris Mazer, Jacob Segal, and Sam Durmaskin.

The problem which was to confront the group most often during its early existence was the widespread ideological differences among the farmers, ranging from left-wing atheism to orthodox Judaism. Resolving the issue of whether this organization was to be a synagogue or a center required the patient of a Job and the skill of a Solomon. Apparently Abe Dobin, the second president, who remained in office for twenty years, succeeded in satisfying everyone. "There is no such choice," he said, "the center is the overall organization of which the most important single function is the synagogue. No one is obligated to observe religion. The strength of our small organization is the various needs it serves."[35]

To satisfy the majority of the membership, conservative services were held and lectures and meetings on secular subjects were scheduled. Religious school was held on Sunday. The congregation functioned without a rabbi during its early years.[36]

The performance of certain religious functions, especially on behalf of the orthodox Jewish population, was considered the responsibility of all of the congregations in the community. For instance, Rev. Eli Dobin was mentioned in Poile Zedek's history as having been brought to the commu-

nity to serve, in one of his capacities, as a *shocket* (kosher slaughterer). For a number of years later (at least seven or eight) it was the custom of each orthodox congregation to contribute equally towards a stipend paid to Rev. Jacob Charney to oversee the ritual slaughtering of meat for the community. Later Rabbi Philip Raymon was made the supervisor of the *Va'ad ha'kashruth* (Board of Kashruth) of New Brunswick and vicinity, which certified the slaughter and koshering of cattle, and supervised the sale of meat products in kosher butcher shops of the area.

There was a number of *mohels* (circumcisors) serving the community too, who performed the *brit milah* (circumcision of male babies). In addition to Rev. Dobin, Rev. Charney and Rev. Samuel Ratner served in this capacity during the period from 1920 through 1948, as well as others who came in from other communities.

The various congregations also made available to their members the sacramental wine and special holiday foods required for celebrating the festivals. At times the wine was home made, because the laws of prohibition prevented it being bought and sold on the open market.

Sometime after 1915, for a period of ten or fifteen years, one of the local Jewish women - Dubra Jelin - gained a reputation for her remarkable cures, and she was sought after by many. Her medical miracles were based on old folklore, and while no one believed in it, many used it. To cure a chest cold or various aches and pains, she would perform "cupping" or in Yiddish *bankes*. This was an attempt to draw blood to the surface with small heated cups, forming a partial vacuum. For swelling, she would rub a smooth bone on the surface and recite certain prayers. Dubra Jelin was also the source for supplying Chanukah candles and Succot *etrog* and *lulav*. She would not only deliver the holiday supplies, but would also help the homebound to say the proper prayers.

Mikvehs (ritual baths) were in existence during this period. In the early days of Ahavas Achim, a *mikveh* existed behind the building, tended by Isidore and Rasha (Ratner) Mirsky. Remains of the *mikveh* can still be seen. Harry Levine recalled "a little mikveh" on Peace Street at the turn of the century, tended by John Davis, although Esther Mirsky Asnes thought that this began as a Turkish bath (where people went for "sweat baths") and only later became a *mikveh*. Still later another *mikveh* was built in the Ladies Aid Sheltering Home on New Street. Anna Beitler was in charge at one time. Many local women, however, recalled having to go to Elizabeth or Newark for the ritual baths required before their wedding ceremonies.

Another religious service provided by the orthodox community has been the *Chevra Kadisha,* a group of pious men and women who prepared the dead for burial according to proper Jewish tradition. Some local names who have been connected with this *Chevra Kadisha* have been Anna and Michael Beitler, Rachel and Ben Pindrus, Dubra Jelin, Berle Levine, Joseph Shein, and Lena Seid. Moritz Klepner and Samuel Aron headed the committee within the Hungarian community and Albert Saltiel and Isaac Beja were among those who served in the Sephardic community.

Finally we note that there were times of congregational rivalry in the Raritan Valley. Not everything went smoothly. There were quarrels, misun-

derstandings and jealousies among the groups. Sharing the services of spiritual leaders, and of the *cheders* (Hebrew schools), the *shockets,* and the *mohels* was sometimes dictated by financial necessity rather than choice, and did not always take place under totally congenial conditions. Nevertheless each of the congregations discussed in this chapter remain viable institutions as we pause in our history in 1948.

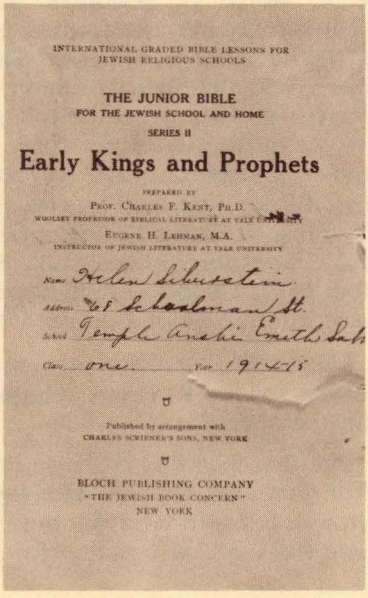
Footnote

Evidence of an additional congregation came to the attention of the author too late for inclusion within the text. On June 8, 1903 a congregation known as ***Shomry Hadas*** *was incorporated in Middlesex County by trustees Albert L. Fertig, Max Koplan, and Albert Weinraub. Its place of worship was 18 Schureman Street in New Brunswick. The legal document was located among old family papers by Ruth Feller Rosenberg. An announcement of this new congregation's incorporation was repeated in the June 9, 1903 copy of* ***The Daily Times,*** *but nothing further could be learned of its continued existence. The name* ***Shomry Hadas*** *can be translated to* ***Keepers of the Faith.***

Confirmation Class, 1913, showing Edith Lederer (Strauss) seated: Edith Klein, Rabbi Ludwig Stern, Toots Gorda (Breitkopf). Anshe Emeth Archives.



Early textbook of "Temple Anshe Emeth Sabbath School" in use 1914, belonging to Helen Silverstein (Ringel).


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THE GROWTH OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...."
Deuteronomy 6: 6-7

One of the most important *mitzvot* (commandments) in the Torah concerns the responsibility of the Jewish people to provide a religious education for its children. The earliest Jewish settlers in the Raritan Valley could not have had an easy time honoring this *mitzvah.* Since Jews were scattered far and wide, it is doubtful that any *melamed* (teacher) passed through the towns, as they did in the European communities. It is more likely that parents themselves provided a Jewish education for their children.

Not until the end of the 19th century do we have documented evidence of any formal instruction. Records of the oldest congregation, Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple are fragmentary from the time of its charter in 1859 until the year 1878, where one source reveals the existence of some form of "instruction for the young".[1]

This congregation erected its first synagogue building on Albany Street in 1897, and by 1900 three dramatic events were recorded: the first full time rabbi, Morris G. Waldman, arrived; the Ladies Auxiliary, headed by Henrietta Lederer, was formed; and the "Sabbath School" was established. (It was not recorded whether "Sabbath" meant Saturday or Sunday.) Fifty nine years later Rosella Gorda (Hanauer) reminisced: "Sabbath School classes were held in the Temple proper. The younger you were, the nearer you sat to the pot-bellied stove. How we itched and wriggled in our long woolen underwear when we sat in the pews close by the stove! How thankful we were for those woolens as we grew older and moved farther away from it. But wriggling or freezing, we learned."[2] Another early pupil, Helen Silverstein (Ringel) still treasures her first Religious School textbook from 1914, a book of Bible stories with her completed worksheets. Helen attended this school until her Confirmation at the age of 16.

The Ladies Auxiliary provided money for refreshments, supplies, and outings for the Religious School from its endless whist game socials and strawberry festivals.

The first recorded evidence of a Bar Mitzvah at Anshe Emeth was in 1913, for Joel Dreier[3], although one source was certain that the Bar Mitzvah of Milford Snyder must have preceded Dreier's.[4] That same year there was the Confirmation for a class of three: Adolphine Gorta (Breit-

kopf), Edith Lederer (Strauss) and Edith Klein. A few years later a confirmation class included Stuart Dreier, Leon Snyder, Milton May, Nathaniel L. Frankel, Meyer Lederer and Herman Hanauer. There is no doubt by this time that Anshe Emeth followed Reform practices, and that only a modicum of Hebrew was taught. Some of the temple's families augmented the Bar Mitzvah students' Hebrew lessons with private tutoring.

The first teacher in the Religious school was Edith Solomon (Hoffman), who served with no remuneration. Edith recalled how Rabbi Waldman convinced her to teach Bible history to a mixed class of twelve pupils, between 1903 and 1904, while she was a student at Trenton State College. Her students were bright and well-behaved and Edith recalled that among them were A. Harry Freedman, Lew Brewer (from South River), and Essie Schwartz (Greussner). Edith laughingly recalled studying the book the Rabbi had given her, just before attempting to teach it. Marguerite Gallen, who taught in 1913, was another of the first Sabbath School teachers, and met her husband-to-be, Nathan Aaron, at Sabbath services there. Edith Lederer (Strauss) also taught in the Sabbath School, following her own Confirmation in 1913. The teaching staff gradually became more professional and by 1925 the teachers' salaries rose from $5.00 monthly to $1.00 per hour.[5]

When Rabbi Nathaniel M. Keller arrived in 1931 to occupy the pulpit of the new edifice on Livingston Avenue, he instituted a two day Religious School, with Hebrew taught on Saturday (although it was not mandatory to attend in the beginning) and Jewish history on Sunday. He instituted the first classes on the High School level as well, and there is a photograph of the graduation of a sizeable class as early as 1933. In 1948 the school was well established, with paid teachers, an integrated program of Hebrew and Jewish studies (the former no longer voluntary), Bar Mitzvah for boys, Confirmation for girls and boys, and High School for an increasingly larger number of students.



Confirmation Class, circa 1928, showing 1st row: Herbert Goodkind, Edward Schwartz, Ralph Kunius, Herbert Zerlip; 2nd row: Adele Hanauer, Charlotte Bruskin, Grace Winfield, Eleanor Kahn, Dorothy Marcus, Syril Strauss, Ernestine Hanauer, Evelyn Marcus; 3rd row: Eva C. Cohen, Rabbi Arthur Hirschberg and Jean Straus. Anshe Emeth Archives.

We shall now attempt to trace the growth of the educational institutions in the orthodox community. In the early 1900s, many of the orthodox families hired private tutors to give Hebrew instruction to their children. Irving Laurie recalled tutors coming to his home to prepare him for his Bar Mitzvah in 1911 at Ahavas Achim. Bessie Blum also recalled private tutors coming to her home to teach Hebrew to herself and her four sisters. Harry Levine's recollections were probably even more typical of that period. Grandson of Wolfe Levine, and son of Benjamin, both charter members of Ahavas Achim, Harry went to a *Cheder* (Hebrew School) daily after school with his brothers. "It was held in a back room of the home of Barnet Hoddeson", Levine recalled, "and eight or nine of us boys would sit on hard benches learning Yiddish from several *rebbes* (teachers) who would come to instruct. My Bar Mitzvah, in 1912, had to be held in the loft above the feed store of Gutman Glaser on Burnet Street, because the shule was being remodeled. Rabbi Isaac Marcus was in charge." Levine recalled no further religious training after that, but he did remember that his brother Herman and Sam Hoddeson continued their studies for many more years.

Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to start a Hebrew School, and in 1914 it was achieved, according to an article written by Sam Hoddeson in *The Banner.* Abraham S. Marcus, Vice President of the YMHA, devoted his personal energies and his private finances to establish this school, which remained under the aegis of the YMHA until 1921, when it became independent. It was organized as a free Hebrew School, so that poor families could educate their children without regard for costs. For the first two years, Marcus financed the school out of his own pocket, and then was instrumental in raising $11,000 from the community to provide more space for the burgeoning school population. During his YMHA presidency in 1918, as he overworked himself after the Morgan explosion to transform the "Y" into a makeshift hospital for the wounded, Marcus contracted influenza and died. *The Banner* commented, "His going left a big gap in our midst", and the Hebrew School was renamed the Abraham S. Marcus Hebrew School as a memorial tribute.

In 1922 a short story in *The Banner* reported on an unusual day in the country arranged for the pupils of the "Y" Sunday School and the Abraham S. Marcus Hebrew School. Arrangements were made to borrow trucks from the Reliable Furniture Company, New York and New Brunswick Trucking Company, and New Brunswick Cornice Works, all festively decorated, to take 500 children for an hour's drive in the country and then convey them to the picnic grounds set up on Sam Kaufman's farm for an exciting day.

In 1924, a reorganization took place and the A.S. Marcus Hebrew School was moved to a building at the corner of Liberty and Neilson Streets and renamed the United Hebrew School. A testimonial dinner was held for one of the school's eminent supporters, Israel Laurie, in 1927. Program notes reveal that he had devoted much of his time to continuing the work of his business associate, Marcus, on behalf of Hebrew education. These notes proclaimed that Laurie worked "every day in the week, and every week in the year...for the welfare of the United Hebrew School, and gave freely of his money, his energy, and even sacrificed his health so that the United



Pupils of the United Hebrew School, 1920, taken on steps of Middlesex County Records Building. The men in the back row are directors, teachers, and parents.

Hebrew School (could) continue to serve its useful purposes."[6] Another notation on this program paid respects to Albert L. Fertig "who by his generous contribution made possible the erection of the United Hebrew School."[7] Fertig's grandson, Dr. Jerome F. Uchin, reported that he mortgaged all of his property in order to help finance the school. For the next twenty years this school served orthodox children throughout the community, regardless of their synagogue affiliation.

Charles Baltin's Jewish education experience was probably typical of the twenties and thirties. Baltin remembered a private Hebrew teacher coming to his home for several years to tutor him. Afterwards he attended the A.S. Marcus School at the "Y", and then continued at the United Hebrew School several times a week after school. He studied Hebrew, learned to participate in and conduct services, studied *chumash* (the Biblical portion of the week), and a limited amount of *Gemorrah* (Talmud). As a post Bar Mitzvah, he was encouraged to continue his religious education through participation in a Junior Congregation developed by Ahavas Achim congregation for Sabbath evening and morning services.

Experiences from the Sephardic community were similar. Leon Naar, one of the sons of Rabbi Benjamin H. Naar, recalled that his father provided tutoring gratis to many of the Sephardic children. In addition, they also attended the Ashkenazic United Hebrew School until their own school at Etz Ahaim was eventually established.

The Jewish education for the young girls was not neglected, although it was not as extensive. Jeanette Hoffman (Busch) recalled being tutored at home with her sisters, although they did not have to study as long as their brothers. The girls also attended the United Hebrew School. Minnie Gabowitz (Howard) was another pupil at the United Hebrew School, attending three afternoons a week for a period of six or seven years. Rose Kaplan (Haritan) and Sara Zimmerman (Siegel) recalled studying at the A.S. Marcus School. Articles in *The Banner* indicated that the education of young children was often supplemented at the YMHA by programs of Bible stories and holiday plays and parties.

In 1945 the need for a Day school program began to be keenly felt by some in the orthodox community. Many children were being sent to day school out of town, causing transportation problems. In addition, the reinforcement of Jewish values through a full educational program was deemed a matter of urgency by those concerned with the continuity of the Jewish people, following the holocaust and the decimation of so much of world Jewry. As a result, the Moriah Yeshiva Academy was established, replacing the United Hebrew School. The same Board of Directors was maintained with Sigmund Sharf as President, and Rabbi Phillip Raymon as director. The Yeshiva began modestly, with twelve children in grades Kindergarten and One, with the express purpose of establishing the first day school in the area.[8] According to Sylvia Kirshner, the early years "were difficult years with severe shortages of money...the school was small, with few pupils and many problems."[9]

For those not willing to enroll in a day school, there was an after school Hebrew program three times a week which coexisted with the Yeshiva for



Transportation, complete with Mogen David, ready to take Religious School children for a day in the country, 1922.

several years, until the shules developed their own programs. In 1946 Ahavas Achim eventually organized a Sunday School program taught by lay teachers to supplement the Hebrew training that many of the children received elsewhere. Jeanette Busch, David Darwin, Charles Baltin, and Rabbi Raymon were instrumental in its organization.

In South River there is little evidence of formal Jewish education until the congregation's first building was dedicated in 1920. It was recorded that behind the chapel there was a small room used at times as a *Cheder* (school), and at times for small social affairs. Joseph Gottfried was the first Hebrew teacher. By the late twenties Dr. Abraham A. Pansy and Alex Siegel devoted much of their time to supervising the curriculum and raising funds for the Hebrew School. In the early thirties the basement room of Mr. Siegel's factory was also occasionally used.[10]

In 1935, after the Jewish Community Center opened at 7 Reid Street, the Hebrew School was moved to its second floor, "in order to have more than one class at the same time and also to conserve fuel at the synagogue."[11] A year later, the local paper recorded the graduation ceremonies of six teen age boys from the South River Hebrew School. The Community Center was to be the headquarters of the school throughout the rest of the period this history covers.

In South River, which was usually considered a part of the greater New Brunswick area during this period of history, there has always been a number of families beginning as early as 1900 sending their children to the Jewish educational institutions in New Brunswick.

Ohav Emeth, the Hungarian congregation, organized its own Talmud Torah in 1923 about five years after its establishment. The school was set up by past president Nicholas H. Gross. The congregation brought in Rabbi Anton Klein to direct the education of the young people. Classes were expanding and were considered quite successful, until the depression hit the community at the beginning of the 1930s, and the congregation slowly began to dwindle. Their historian Ernest Vajda, who was president when the school began, lamented, "Like on a sinking ship, in order to lighten the load, not only worthless ballast but even valuables are thrown overboard. So it was with the congregation. The Talmud Torah was discontinued, the

greatly honored and respected Rabbi Klein was left without income and it became necessary for him to leave the congregation."[12] However, the United Hebrew School was an available alternative by then, as was the Moriah Academy after 1945. Those who did not choose to attend a day school, studied with the congregational rabbi on a one-to-one basis. In order to stimulate their children's interest in Judaism, a Sunday morning kindergarten was established at the shule in 1946 where the youngsters heard Bible stories.

There were many Hebrew teachers who played an important part in the lives of the Raritan Valley orthodox Jewish citizens who grew up in the area since the turn of the century. The earliest name mentioned was Moshe Ratner who conducted a *Cheder* atop a bakery shop at the corner of Schureman and Burnet Streets, between 1904-1910. For a brief period, at the same time, a young Jewish scholar from Philadelphia provided special Hebrew lessons for girls.

Some of the teachers gave private lessons, others had small *cheders* in their own homes or in stores, and still others taught in the United Hebrew School or the various Talmud Torahs that were associated with the congregations. Additional names not previously mentioned in this Chapter included Rebbe Zarkin, Rebbe Levine, Rebbe Bolber, A. Warshefsky, Rabbi Helfman, Jacob Richmond, Mr. Gershuni, Leib Dardik, Rabbi Joseph Ravitz, Samuel Nelson, Mr. Katz-Nelson, Julia Stollman, Andrew Blumberg, and Rachel Ratner Luskin. (The latter taught Yiddish in her home). There was also a number of Rutgers Agricultural students from Palestine who tutored Hebrew.[13]

Another area of Jewish education, conducted by the Workman's Circle, began to take shape in 1924. From its progressive youth group, the Circle developed a school program geared to the secular aspects of Judaism, concentrating on the teaching of the Yiddish language and Jewish History. According to Dr. Samuel H. Siegel, the Circle's headquarters were by this time in the Labor Lyceum at 53 New Street, which was built by Circle



Leaders of Talmud Torah, circa 1926. Front row: A.I. Skriloff, Meyer Feller, Max Feller, Rabbi Samuel Baskin, Moses Busch, Nathan Cohn, Israel Laurie. Back row: Samuel Spitz, Julius Baltin, Louis Swiller, Abraham Jelin, Joseph D. Marcus, and Abe Fertig.

members as a voluntary effort. "The big facilities of the Lyceum, its big auditorium, its spacious rooms, contributed considerably towards enhancement of many activities," said Dr. Siegel.[14] The first chairwoman of the school (Branch 208) was Sabrina Davis, who with her elected School Board determined the aims and policies of this regular after-school program, as they projected what were to be "relatively modest activities."[15] Members of that first School Board were H. Solowey, A. Davis, A. Bers, L. Greenwald, and B. Goldfarb.[16]

At this point other religious school programs began to develop. The Highland Park Conservative Temple was originally organized as an educational program. In 1926, a group of men pledged $5,000 to establish a Religious School, so that their children would no longer have to travel across the river to New Brunswick's schools. Under the leadership of William Fiertag, they hired Rabbi I. Horowitz of New York to teach Hebrew in the rear of a store at 10 N. 4th Avenue and for the next three years, this educational program was known as the Highland Park Hebrew School Association. Their own building was completed in 1930, and the Highland Park Jews incorporated their religious activities into a congregation to be known as the Highland Park Conservative Temple. Rabbi I.S. Ravetch was hired, and he organized four daily after-school classes with children from ages seven to fifteen. Grace Winfield (Schragger) was the only assisting teacher that first year. Children were taught Hebrew, Jewish history, Hebrew literature, and Bible. "Once a year a public examination was held in the Temple, attended by the parents of the students and other Temple members", reminisced Edwin Margolius. "Each student... was made to (publicly) demonstrate the extent of his knowledge and progress." Bar mitzvahs and confirmations were conducted "in impressive ceremonies"..showing the students to have been "thoroughly prepared".[17] Of the first twenty seven boys celebrating their Bar Mitzvah in the Temple's first five years, four were signaled out as having been particularly well prepared: Le Roy Davidson, Aaron Beck, Marvin Susswein and Hillel Fedol.[18] In 1931 the Highland Park Conservative Temple also graduated its first Confirmation Class consisting of Felicia Federman, Gertrude Geffner, Edna Lichtenstein, Sylvia Kirschner, and Estelle Holiner. The Religious School grew quickly, as did the Jewish population in Highland Park which by 1943 had grown to over 2,000 or 22.8% of the population.



Highland Park Temple Hebrew students, circa 1932, with Rabbi Ravitch. In front row are one of the rabbi's sons, Beulah Kotis, Blanche Berkowitz, and Sidney Berkowitz. In rear are another of the rabbi's sons, Marvin Susswein, Albert Davis, and Aaron Beck.



Highland Park Temple Religious School pupils, 1930.



Highland Park past confirmants and bar mitzvahs, 1935.

However, not content with the low percentage of Jewish families throughout the area who were providing a Jewish education for their children, the leaders of the Jewish Community Center, when they were dedicating their new building on Kirkpatrick Street in 1929, called on the rest of the citizens of Raritan Valley to enroll their children in the Center's Sunday School. They announced that there were only 300 Jewish children receiving any Jewish education in an area which had 1100 Jewish children. "What ought to be done about this?" they asked in *The Banner*. "The same thing that other communities are doing, and doing effectively. That is to organize a Jewish Education Committee that will act and not argue. In this particular instance it is action that we need, not words," they exhorted. "When so many children are not being given a Jewish education, the community ought to do something."[19]

How long this effort lasted we cannot be certain, but Charles Baltin recalled that it did not meet with much success, because valid or not, it posed a threat to the individual congregational schools. Again, in 1944-45 the Jewish Community Center tried to organize a United Education Committee of representatives from every local organization to plan joint programs. However once again the effort was unsuccessful.

In South Brunswick, by 1942 a group of Jewish farmers organized into the Jewish Farmers Community Center of Middlesex County and one of their first goals was to provide for the educational training of their young. The first school started originally in January 1943 as a one-day Sunday School, organized by laymen, and functioned without a rabbi. A religious committee, consisting of Simon Schultz, Louis Stabsky, Frank Vinocur, Morris Mazer, Jacob Segal, and Sam Durmaskin, handled many of the details. Gradually the school began to show growth in size (reaching 30 children at its peak) and in number of school hours.[20]

Several of the Social Service organizations in the area lent assistance to the educational institutions from time to time. The National Council of Jewish Women described some of their educational activities in their 1927 Yearbook. The committee was headed by Louise Schlesinger, and included

Bessie Marcus, Bessie Jelin, Rebecca Cohn, Josephine Winfield, and Sarah Levine. Their work consisted of providing holiday parties, entertainment, religious school prizes, and financial aid to some of the schools. They helped in registering and enrolling children for the United Hebrew School and the Y.W.H.A. In order to invite the children to a Chanukah party at the Hebrew School, they printed circulars in both Yiddish and English. They joined with the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent and the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society in giving each of the children at the party a box of candy for the holiday. They also distributed prayerbooks to every child attending a Religious School.[21]

To conclude this picture of the Jewish educational aspects of the Raritan Valley, we point out some very revealing facts taken from a Jewish population survey of 1943 in an area which comprised New Brunswick, Highland Park, and "a small portion" of Franklin Township and North Brunswick.[22] There was a total of only 209 pupils between the ages of five and fourteen attending some form of religious or Jewish school. (It is interesting to note that only thirteen children were recorded as receiving private tutoring, whereas we know from the above accounts that until the thirties the majority of children were being educated in that way.) The unknown author of this survey estimated that only one third, or 33%, of the possible students were being instructed, and many of these were receiving only minimal instruction. The picture is nevertheless encouraging, at least quantitatively, if we compare this figure to an article in the 1929 *Banner* estimating that only 28% of the children were receiving even a modicum of Jewish education.

Chapter VII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICES

"The poor among them shall not become a burden to the Company or community, but be supported by their own nation."..... West India Company of Amsterdam, in letter of instructions to Gov. Peter Stuyvesant - 1654

The concept of responsibility for the welfare of their brethern is so central to the Judaic creed that it is unlikely that the early Jewish settlers would have acted otherwise towards their needy, regardless of the instructions from the West India Company. After their flight from Recife, Brazil, the first group of these Jews was reluctantly accepted in the colony of New Amsterdam by the inhospitable governor, Peter Stuyvesant, on instructions from his parent company. Although the Jewish settlers eventually resisted many of the injustices inflicted upon them, they considered the support of their poor a *mitzvah* (a good deed, a commandment) which they readily accepted. The history of the development of various social services for the Jewish community of the Raritan Valley indicates this same sense of responsibility.

The earliest example concerned the widow Hannah Louzada, who was left destitute with "a lunatic son" when her husband Moses died in 1750.[1] Her name appeared frequently in the records of Shearith Israel - the only existing synagogue in New York at the time - as she appealed from New Brunswick for charity.[2]

By 1852 an estimated twenty to twenty five Jews residing in the area formed The Hebrew Benevolent Society of New Brunswick. The Society's main purpose seems to have been the purchase of a cemetery plot and the provision of traditional burial services for the members.[3] What other benefits were provided can only be guessed, although it is known that other Benevolent Societies throughout the country at the time provided money, food, and employment to destitute immigrants.[4]

When the Anshe Emeth congregation was organized a few years later in 1859, it seems likely that some social services and charitable assistance were available to those in need, although the early record books are not in existence. Items appeared regularly in records after 1900 of payments for local charitable assistance. In 1901 the Ladies Auxiliary voted to use its treasury to help a "poor Jewish family in distress".[5] Gifts from one to five dollars were regularly recorded for a number of years including five dollars for a

midwife for this same family. In 1906 the Auxiliary voted to underwrite the cost of placing two of this family's children in foster homes. Other charitable gifts noted in the early years were the provision of two carriages for a woman's funeral at a cost of five dollars, the purchase of an artificial leg for a local man, and transportation costs given to another local man with tuberculosis to go to a hospital in Colorado. In many of these cases it was noted that the rabbi was delegated to make the arrangements for the gift, in order to allow the recipient a certain degree of anonymity.

Although this practice of providing charitable assistance to other Jews in need continued through the efforts of Anshe Emeth and all the other congregations which followed, it was not long before three organizations were created primarily to serve these purposes. While there may have been some duplication of services offered, representatives of the three organizations interviewed by the author felt that each had a different emphasis, and that for the most part they worked together in unity.

In 1905, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society was organized by Leah Feller, not only to do local charity work but to "provide board and lodging to those poor strangers who found themselves stranded in New Brunswick and in need".[6] In the beginning private rooms were located as needed, but by 1908 the women were able to purchase a home at 85 John Street to serve as a Hebrew Sheltering Home. Having only one hundred dollars in their treasury, it took them nine years to pay off the twenty three hundred dollar purchase price. In 1917, the John Street property was sold for thirty five hundred dollars, and two properties at 42-44 New Street were purchased. Five years later, it became imperative to enlarge quarters, and a new building was erected at 42 New Street at the cost of thirty six thousand dollars. To get an idea of the wide use of this Home, the following is an excerpt from the 1926 records:

> *"For the past three years we lodged and fed 3,024 travelers including men, women, and children. During the past year two women with their children occupied two rooms for a period of seven months, and one room was occupied by a sick woman for two months. Two women who had escaped from an asylum were found and brought to this Institution and were taken care of until claimed by relatives. At the present time a room is occupied by a woman and child, another room by a man who is out of work and intends to get work in this town, having no relatives or friends in the area."*[7]

Apparently no one in need was ever turned away - a policy which severely taxed the organization's financial circumstances. Along with the elderly and the stranded, there is also evidence in 1933 of a scholarship student at the Rutgers Agricultural School who was given a free room without board for a year. In addition lodging was provided for a number of visiting rabbis who came through the area.

The Home served other community purposes. There was a *mikveh* (ritual bath) on the premises, which was used by many brides in the area. Minnie Gabowitz Howard vividly recalled Leah Feller escorting her to the Home before her marriage for the ritual ablutions, as she did with many other young women. Anna Beitler was in charge of this *mikveh*, while she and her

husband Michael were caretakers from 1925-1930. They lived on the top floor with their family, and their son David recalled witnessing several weddings and bar mitzvahs taking place in this Home. After the Beitlers left, Rachel and Ben Pindrus served as caretakers at the Home.

Leah Feller remained President of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society for many years. In 1932 she was made Honorary President and Esther Glasser took over the Presidency. Bessie Jelin headed the first Building Committee. Money was raised through general fundraising, and as an interesting sidelight, many townspeople were recorded as donating a ton of coal at various times. In 1933, the New Street Home was foreclosed due to financial difficulties. Shortly thereafter, with borrowed money, the organization was able to purchase a small six room house at 111 Neilson Street which was still in use as a Sheltering Home in 1948.[8]

In September of 1910 a second charitable organization developed, known as the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent. Begun by Mary Feller (the step-daughter-in-law of Leah), the purpose of the Benevolent was to help the needy and the aged by providing food, clothing, and non-interest loans. The members were often called upon to help boys celebrate their Bar Mitzvah by supplying clothing and food for the occasion. Anna Amdur was the first president of this organization, which initially consisted of ten women, and at its peak many years later had as many as three hundred members. The loan program was perhaps the greatest *mitzvah* of all, for people with no collateral and no visible way of repaying a loan could obtain as much as $200. No interest was charged and no fixed schedule of payments demanded. Co-signers, however, were required. Payments were made in whatever amounts could be spared - as little as a quarter - and rarely was a loan not eventually repaid in full.[9] Strict confidence was maintained, permitting the borrower the dignity and self respect needed during a time of stress. Bessie Laurie Marcus was the first person to chair the Loan department. The women felt a responsibility to the whole city, and the thrust of their efforts included contributing to other charitable organizations, responding to the calls of the Welfare Department, the Settlement House, and the local Parent Teacher Association for quick assistance, with no questions asked. They aided families of the unemployed, and helped Jews and non-Jews alike. The Loan program started in 1913 when a downtown merchant, Amelia Marks, came to the Benevolent with another merchant who was having financial problems and needed an immediate loan of $25. She herself offered to guarantee the loan. This was the beginning of the Free Loan assistance, and when Mrs. Marks died, she bequeathed $1,000 to the Benevolent to continue this Free Loan system.

Benevolent presidents following Anna Amdur, have included Mary Feller, Gussie Singer, Rose Spitz, Annie Rineberg, Kate Kessler, Rose Weiss, Sophie Wolfe, Ethel Sapiro, Rose Elfant, Flo Grollman, and Minnie Klaus.

Benevolent also undertook an annual campaign to support the Deborah Foundation. In 1922 the National Deborah Hospital Foundation had been organized by Dora Moness Shapiro to support a tuberculosis sanitorium which might conquer "the white plague".[10] Mrs. Shapiro wanted medical

services available for everyone, regardless of their economic limitations and it was the work of the Deborah units around the country to raise funds for this non-sectarian hospital. Over the years as the incidence of tuberculosis waned, the hospital in Brown's Mills turned to other diseases of the chest, in particular heart disease, and the sanitorium in southern New Jersey became an important cardiopulmonary center. In 1926 a relative of a friend of Clara Falk (Frank) who was a patient in the Sanitorium, came to the local Benevolent to seek support. Responding to this plea Benevolent for many years ran a house-to-house campaign on behalf of Deborah.

While Kate Kessler was the Benevolent president in 1926, she also organized a group of teenage boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 17 into what was known as the Junior League of Deborah. According to Bernice Kessler, her daughter, who was elected the first president of the Junior League, the group met at the YMHA on Liberty Street, and while it fulfilled a much needed social outlet for the young people, it also gave them a sense of responsibility for the raising of funds for the Deborah Sanitorium. Their major fundraising event each year was a Tag Day, where funds were solicited in the downtown area. Other presidents to follow Bernice included Mary Shapiro, Bess Gross, Louis Glasser and Florence Hoffman. This group eventually evolved into a separate Deborah unit, known as the New Brunswick Chapter of Deborah.

Another important community service began in 1913 when Amelia Marks - the same charitable woman mentioned earlier - left money in her estate to be "used for the benefit of the Jewish poor in New Brunswick", as well as "to provide dowries for poor brides".[11] Amelia was a childless woman who, together with her husband Israel, kept a small shop and led a simple life. While living frugally she managed to save (literally hidden in her mattress) over $80,000 for this special *mitzvah*. She had designated that the money be invested by the United Hebrew Charities of New York, for her stated purposes, and in 1924 this organization selected a group of outstanding New Brunswick citizens to distribute the income from the estate. This committee consisted of Samuel D. Hoffman, Israel Laurie, Abraham Jelin, Mary Feller and William Schlesinger. In 1926 the committee set up a non-profit corporation, The Jewish Social Service Association, Inc., which eventually became the Jewish Social Service Committee of New Brunswick, Highland Park, and vicinity. Rose Spitz, Leah Feller, Bessie Marcus, and Sophie Wolfe joined the five founders in the new association. Presidents of this organization have included William Schlesinger (1926-31), Abraham Jelin (1931-45), and Dr. John Sokoloff (1945-48).

Josephine Winfield who joined the committee in 1931 recalled that there has always been a number of needy Jewish families in the area, whose plight was brought to the attention of the Social Service Committee by the clergy, the Benevolent, or the Ladies Aid, thus avoiding the necessity of their applying for public welfare. Families involved were either generally impoverished, unemployed on account of sickness, or deserted by their breadwinner. Usually some form of direct financial help, or referral to an appropriate agency, or a supply of food and clothing would ease the situation. Several weddings and bar mitzvahs were arranged for needy families.

Another women's group which provided a strong influence on the

Raritan Valley area in the early days of the twentieth century was the Council of Jewish Women, founded in 1921. Perusal of their 1928 year book revealed a program of remarkable proportions. Lottie Simon, working with the blind and sight conservation committee, saw to it that orphaned or poor children were provided with eye examinations and glasses. Miriam Wallach worked with various civic and community organization fundraising events as a liaison person of Council, Rosella Hanauer as head of the education committee not only had study classes arranged for the members, but offered school prizes for essays, and arranged to have Essie Gruessner tutor a special child with school problems. The unusual account from this yearbook read:

> *For a period of almost three months we tutored a ten year old youngster whose school work was poor because of lack of sufficient sleep and carelessness. We required a Health Chart of the child, her brother, and sister, and soon had them regulated nicely, going to bed at nine o'clock instead of twelve or twelve-thirty as before. The child's marks showed improvement almost at once.*[12]

A program of aid to the Farmers, headed by Gussie Singer, provided financial help to farm children to attend special camps and schools. The President, Bessie Marcus, represented Council at a Conference in Trenton on Rural affairs. Special effort to aid immigrants was exerted. Mary Feller, head of this committee commented, "Can one conceive of a finer service than that given through our international service to stranded immigrants in foreign countries, the locating of relatives who have drifted apart for many years from their old and feeble parents or relatives. Just stop and visualize the joy and happiness when these are reunited through the efforts of our international service."[13] One example of this work was the time they assisted a young girl stranded in Havana, Cuba without funds, by locating her brother living in New Brunswick and arranging for him to send her necessary money. Another time they located relatives of a widow and four children who were near starvation in a small village in Galicia, and sent financial help.

Another exciting Council program was the Free Milk Distribution, which was founded and headed by Sophie Wolfe in 1926. Milk was distributed to poor children regardless of race, color, or religion, at three stations through New Brunswick, with the costs underwritten by a Tag Day. Another unusual Council activity was the casework involved with Jewish orphans. A committee headed by Bessie Marcus, took on the very difficult task of placing these children (in 1928 there were four cases) in foster homes or Jewish institutions. Without the finances to insure private placements, the Council met with many problems because the New York and Newark institutions had long waiting lists. Two of the children finally had to be placed temporarily in non-Jewish homes, one was sent to the Erie Orphanage, and the fourth to a private home in Clifton, N.J. Council made an attempt to set up an Orphanage Fund, but it did not receive community support, and was abandoned.

One of Council's members, Sophie Wolfe, traveled to Trenton weekly to observe the legislative sessions, and to represent the views and interests of Council. In 1929 Miriam Wallach planned a series of literary and dramatic

recitals open to the public, at the invitation of the director of the YM-YWHA. Mrs. Marcus, at Council Sabbath at Anshe Emeth spoke on the growing anti-semitism sweeping Europe, and appealed for aid to save the Jews from annihilation, and their synagogues from destruction. Council sponsored a community Seder in 1931, in conjunction with the Sisterhood of Anshe Emeth.

Presidents of the National Council of Jewish Women included Louise Schlesinger (1921-25), Sarah Dreier (1925-26), Sophie Wolfe (1926-27), Bessie Marcus (1927-28; 1929-31), and Bessie Jelin (1928-29). No records exist after 1931, and it is thought that the organization might have disbanded sometime in the thirties despite the fact that in 1928 there were over 150 active members.

Minnie Howard recalled being part of the Junior National Council of Jewish Women. Sophie Wolfe organized these juniors to help distribute the milk at the three downtown milk stations. Bessie Marcus also took the Juniors to entertain the orphans at the Children's Home on Somerset Street. Marian Silverstein was listed as President of the Junior Council in 1924.

We turn at this point to the discussion of another organization, B'nai Brith. In 1873 there is a brief mention in local archives of the existence of a B'nai Brith men's lodge, which in three years is known to have grown to 32 members.[14] Apparently the organization declined after that, to be revived again in 1922.[15] Louis Friedberg was elected temporary chairman, and Alex Levine temporary secretary. A delegation from Philadelphia arrived to organize a lodge, with the help of Rabbi Klein, a field secretary for the District. After a congratulatory editorial in the local *Banner,* the "Y" publication, no subsequent records could be located to determine the success of this group.

B'nai Brith had been established nationally since 1843, and over the years had supported a variety of orphanages, hospitals, and Homes for the Aged. Its main underlying purpose was to strengthen and stimulate Jewish community life. Since 1913 it had also supported the Anti-Defamation League to combat anti-semitism, and to work for the democratic rights of all people. The organization has, in addition, since 1924 built up a network of Hillel Foundations on various college campuses.

In New Brunswick the B'nai Brith Lodge #1632 was established about 1942, as part of District #3. Its program has included fundraising for national and local projects, providing special programs at Hillel, developing youth groups when needed (referred to as B'nai Brith Youth Organizations or BBYO), working on behalf of human rights, cooperating with the District Anti-Defamation League (ADL), providing educational programs through their library of films, and giving members an insurance program. Presidents have included Harold Sklarew, Dr. Bernard Friedman, Lou Gorelick, Kivie Shulman, and Sid Sokoloff.[16]

In 1946 a women's group of B'nai Brith was organized, known as the Simcha Chapter which raised funds for Jewish sponsored, non-sectarian hospitals, worked with new citizens in the county, and with veterans. They also began their assistance program for the Rutgers Hillel Foundation on

Church Street, particularly helping during holidays and special occasions by cleaning the kitchen and cooking kosher meals for Passover. Sylvia Weinstein was the first president, followed by Helen Friedman.

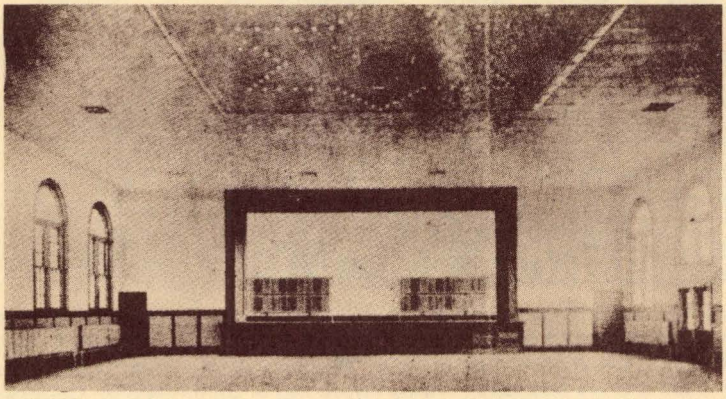
On September 15, 1932, Rabbi I.S. Ravetch of the Highland Park Conservative Temple met with a group of men to organize the Park Men's Club.[17] The aim of this group was to bring the Jews of Highland Park into a closer fellowship in a variety of activities. Membership in the Temple was not required. This organization provided free medical service to its members, and instituted its own Federal Credit Union. The group had gained governmental permission to establish this Union, despite the fact that members came from all walks of life. It was permitted to take deposits from and give loans to its members. Merchants, for instance, would borrow to buy holiday stock for their stores. This Credit Union was finally terminated in 1946, according to its treasurer, Dr. Bernard Friedman, after veteran Robert Friedberg returned home from overseas army service to clear out the last existing account amounting to $12.00! The Park Men's Club also had a basketball team, sparked by local athletes Edward Blumberg and Milton Mirsky which engaged teams such as the Boston Celtics to play exhibition games with them. One year the Celtics kidded around so much that to their chagrin, they lost the game! Presidents of this club have included Rabbi Ravetch, Dr. J. Moss, then Abram Friedberg for many years, and finally Walter Goldstein.

This historical account of the Jewish presence in the Raritan Valley returns now to the year 1911. The organized Jewish community had developed three of its congregations by this time, plus the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society with its Sheltering Home, and the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent which sponsored charitable undertakings and free loans. However this was the extent of the organized Jewish community at the time. Many needs were still unmet, needs such as recreation, cultural and social activities, and a more adequate program for Jewish education. To fill this gap, a group of eleven men met in the Anshe Emeth Temple on Albany Street in 1911 to discuss the launching of a Young Men and Women's Hebrew Association (YM & YWHA).

It is interesting that these men came from all walks of life, and particularly that they represented both the Reform and the Orthodox congregations. These founders were Harry S. Feller, Jesse Strauss, Abraham S. Marcus, Joseph D. Marcus, Marks Lewine, Henry Landsberg, Harold Solomon, Harry Strauss, Abraham Jelin, Hyman Mann, and Morris Sauber. Feller was selected the first president. The first home of the "Y" was a large rented room on George Street, complete with games, books, and pool table. As the needs grew, other activities were added and soon it became necessary to seek larger quarters. In 1913 a home was purchased at 62 New Street. The "Y" was now legally incorporated with trustees listed as Harry S. Feller, Garrett Dreier, David Posner, Morris Sauber and Joe Zar.[18]

For the next ten years the educational program and club activities increased rapidly, reaching a peak when the "Y" moved to new and larger headquarters on Kirkpatrick Street. Rebecca Barnet (Newman) ecstatically

wrote of the new building in an issue of the *Banner:* "What stately halls, brilliant affairs, gay bazaars, joyous celebrations, huge mass meetings, inspiring lectures, uplifting concerts, in short what happiness can be extended through the medium of such a building."[19] She alluded to the severe problem that kept rearing its head every once in a while in communal affairs, as she wrote: "Let petty quarrels, jealousy, self, and power be forgotten as we dedicate not only the building, but ourselves to the service of one another."[20] Jack Ratner in another article, wrote of the physical building: "its tastefully decorated, its enormous proportions, its electrified Mogen David blue and white ceiling lights, its auditorium built to seat 1500 for theater, movies, and lectures; its gym with its lockers and showers, and the old building used for club rooms.[21]



YMHA Kirkpatrick St. Auditorium. Reprinted from the YMHA Banner, October, 1923.

It was here in the Kirkpatrick Street "Y" that many of the athletic teams such as the Colts and the Hakoahs in the '30s flexed their muscles and played competitively with other "Y's". (More details in Chapter on Youth Groups) It was also here that many an amateur thespian got a start in the dramas, musicals, and minstrels under the name of the Habima Guild. Selma Spielberger was the director, Charles and Will Baltin often the writers, and Irving Moselowitz the lyricist. Names that were legend among the actors and actresses included Sadye Grossman, Nettie Meyer, Leon Meyer, the Medwin twins, Blanche Halpern, Jack Kaplan, Mollie Peshkin and a score of others.

The depression of the early thirties once again brought financial stress to the Jewish community, and the beautiful building on Kirkpatrick Street was foreclosed. The organization of the "Y", however, managed to weather the storm of the depression, aided by a group of young people headed by Charles Baltin who pledged to keep it viable and active. By 1936 the "Y" moved to new headquarters, sharing the facilities of the United Hebrew School at Liberty and Neilson Streets. The name was changed to Jewish Community Center, and little by little the organization began to regain its strength. It soon became evident, however, that a new and modern home of



The building committee which made possible the Kirkpatrick St. building, dedicated in October, 1923. Left to right seated: Louis Friedberg, Jesse Strauss, D. Solomon, Philip Bruskin, Abe Jelin and M. Freiman. Members of the building committee not present when picture was taken are A. Friedberg, S. Cindin and M. Goodkind. Reprinted from the YMHA Banner, October, 1923.



The first anniversary of the YMHA was celebrated in the fall of 1912 with a banquet at the old Brunswick Hall on Church Street. Here is a picture of the 200 guests present at that affair.

its own must be found. By 1946 the selection of the Rice Estate in Highland Park was made for the future home of the "Y", but its fruition was far from a reality in 1948.[22]

The listing of presidents of the YMHA and later the J.C.C. was as follows: Harry S. Feller (1911-13), Jesse Strauss (1914-15), Abraham Jelin (1916), Jesse Strauss (1917), Abraham Marcus (1918), Philip Bruskin (1919-20), Samuel Hoddeson (1921), Louis Friedberg (1922-23), Philip Brenner (1923), Arnold B. Rosenthal (1924-25), Samuel G. Cohen (1926), Samuel D. Hoffman (1927-28), Abram B. Friedberg (1929-30), Charles Baltin (1935-37 now referred to as the J.C.C.), Ishmael Sklarew (1937-40), Alfred A. Katz (1940-42), David D. Deutsch (1942-44), Ishmael Sklarew (1944-46), Abraham B. Halpern (1946-47), Sol Seid (1947-48), and Alex Eber (1948). For several years the chairman of the Board was listed as Abraham Rocker (1924-25), Louis Friedberg (1931-33), and Herman Anekstein (1934-35).

Formal women's groups within the "Y" were sporadic. In 1922 Bertha Kramer was President of the YWHA while in 1923 Ida Salls served in the Presidency of the "Y" Ladies Auxiliary. In 1925 Kate Lang was listed as the presiding officer. Next we hear of a group of Young Married Women organized in 1932 with Marian Jelin, Amelia Levine and Serena Stein active. By 1938 a Women's Division was recorded, with the earliest leaders including Ann Pecker, Beatrice Ratner, Tess Horowitz, Marian Jelin, Gertrude Cohen, Eleanor Smith, Vivian Krafchick, Lillian Levowitz and Dora Goodkind. The first elected president was Marian Jelin, followed by Elanor Kahn Smith (1942), Adele Brody (1943), Rose Danzis (1944), and Jeanette Roth Horowitz (1945-48).

The program planning for an active organization such as the "Y" could never have been maintained without the aid of professional staff members who have also made an important contribution to this community. These professionals included Abraham Finkelstein, Charles Martinband, Max Feder, Irving Solomon, Joseph Levitan, Max Sokol, Rabbi Abraham Chill, Ann Pecker, Milton A. Mandel, and Martin E. Danzig.

Before leaving the history of the YMHA in the Raritan Valley, it must be recorded that Harry S. Feller, who served as its first President from 1911 to 1913, was to be elected first president of the newly formed State Federation of YMHAs around 1920.[23] His "dynamic leadership" in several terms of office made everyone in the local "Y" proud,[24] and encouraged much local participation in Statewide activities.[25]

World War II brought about the development of two new organizations in the social service field. A Middlesex County unit of the Jewish Welfare Board was functioning since 1942 when Camp Kilmer became a major point of embarkation for soldiers. Although this unit was established to serve the Jewish soldiers who passed through the area, it provided services for all other soldiers as well. Sidney Lans and Nat Singer were the professional staff. The J.W.B. shared facilities at first with the National Catholic Council Services, and next with the U.S.O. on Somerset Street. For a period it was housed in the Jelin Building at Railroad Plaza, then in the Salvation Army building, and finally the Jewish Welfare Board was set up at Camp



Irene Ringel crowned Queen of Camp Kilmer in 1947.

Kilmer itself. The unit organized groups to sew, knit, service the canteen, provide dances, make hospital visits, and provide religious services and seders. Young women of the area served as Junior Hostesses and were recruited by Adele Brody, Blanche Friedman, Minnie Howard, Florence Freedman, and Irene Ringel (Vogel). Sally Patt Shure, who was a Traveler's Aid professional also assisted the effort. Anabelle Kaiser and Florence Greenberg (Friedman) were active on the committee. Irene Ringel (Vogel) recalled that "Our main concern was to recruit Junior Hostesses to dance, talk, play cards and games, and conduct quizzes, trying to provide a little relaxation for the soldiers before they were to leave for overseas combat. Senior hostesses acted as chaperones, worked in the canteen, mended clothing, and were there to listen when needed. At the hospitals, in addition to our knitting and donating blood, we collected fillers for ditty-bags, wrote letters, did sing-a-longs and danced. On Friday nights we tried to provide a *kiddush* at the Plainfield Avenue U.S.O. where an *Oneg Shabbat* was scheduled at the Chapel. We also had Seders at the Mess Hall. These were the only times we worked specifically for the Jewish soldiers. We found the work demanding, but very rewarding."[26]

Minnie Howard added recollections of arranging for two weddings among the soldiers about to embark, and quite a number of *Brit Milah* (circumcisions) for their infants. Many of the soldiers' wives were invited to stay in New Brunswick homes for last minute visits to their loved ones about to go overseas. Josephine Winfield, who served at the U.S.O. offices, recalled laying mattresses on the floor of her home for these last minute guests - only the guests were given the beds, the family the floor! She also recalled having a wedding in her home for a Christian couple.

After World War II ended, the Jewish Welfare Board local unit, now headed by Minnie Howard, took on a share of the responsibility of weekly visits to the Jewish veterans at the Lyons Hospital. Sabbath services were usually held by the J.W.B. rabbi, and the women's units from surrounding counties would in turn provide a simple *kiddush*. At first a quonset hut was used on the grounds of the hospital, but later only a small room was available. During the time the quonset hut was in use, the Auxiliary of the Jewish War Veterans would arrange for parties and Seders for the veterans, and would also provide them with good clothing. The Jewish Welfare Board

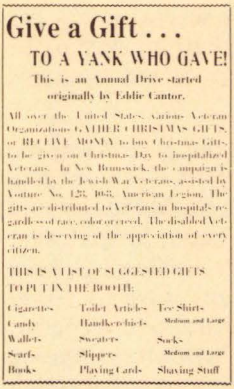
assigned to many of the local supporting organizations several weeks per year when they would have to provide either the *kiddush* or an evening of entertainment. Sisterhoods of the synagogues and most of the women's organizations assumed their share of the work.

The last of the social service groups to develop during this period was the Jewish War Veterans. New Brunswick Post #133 was first established in 1936, and incorporated in December 1945. Trustees Jack Rashkind, Arnold Rechtschaefer, Ben Shapiro, Lou Gartenberg, and Leon Singer were elected. They chose as their attorney and service officer Gabriel Kirzenbaum. The purposes of the Jewish War Veterans were to foster Americanism, patriotism, democracy, to fight anti-semitism and all forms of bigotry, to preserve comradeship and a spirit of helpfulness among veterans and their families, and to honor those who died in service through preservation of records and protection of graves from neglect. Many of the leaders and members had belonged to the American Legion Post, and many maintained membership in both. Al Reisfield, who had once commanded the Joyce Kilmer Post, became the first Jewish War Veteran commander in 1936. He was followed by Walter H. Goldstein (1937), Jacob Ratner (1938), Dr. Louis Goldberg (1939-40), Benjamin Spritzer (1941), Jacob L. Rashkind (1942), Max Silverbush (1943), Benjamin Spritzer (1944), Gabriel Kirzenbaum (1945), Dr. Joel Fertig (1946), Abraham Fisch (1947), and Herbert Tanzman (1948).[27]

Gabby Kirzenbaum recalled that he had been reluctant at first to see a Veteran's organization formed for those of the Jewish faith only, but his interest in the American Legion began to diminish when its leaders did not put a wholehearted effort into the fight against the rise of the Bund Societies in New Jersey. He spoke of an event in 1939 when he and Louis Howard, tired of waiting for the Legion to back them up, tried to break up a Nazi gathering at a tavern on Hamilton Street by themselves. Although Kirzenbaum reported that the glass in his car was shattered with a pipe, they did succeed in disrupting the meeting.

In September 1935, in a Daily Home News article, Kirzenbaum was described as representing the Joyce Kilmer Post at a State Convention where he submitted a resolution calling for "the investigation of un-American activities at the local colleges, and the employment of alien instructors who advocated doctrines of Nazism, Communism, and Facism, inconsistent with the fundamental American concepts."[28] In 1936, assisted by Samuel Hoffman, the J.W.V. helped raise funds to assist Jews in leaving Germany. They also sold stamps which said "Don't buy German goods". In 1938, encouraged by the Jewish members, the American Legion Post 88 in Highland Park issued a criticism of the State office for failure to take a positive stand against Nazism.

The Jewish War Veterans continued their constant efforts as a watchdog for anti-American, anti-semitic actions, calling public attention to everything from "restricted" advertisements, to the dissemination of virulent literature in the mails. Once when the Humane Society tried to get a State bill passed against the method of kosher slaughtering, Kirzenbaum under the banner of the J.W.V. was in the forefront of those opposing the bill.[29]



Give a Gift . . .

TO A YANK WHO GAVE!

This is an Annual Drive started originally by Eddie Cantor.

All over the United States, various Veteran Organizations GATHER CHRISTMAS GIFTS, or RECEIVE MONEY to buy Christmas Gifts, to be given on Christmas Day to hospitalized Veterans. In New Brunswick, the campaign is handled by the Jewish War Veterans, assisted by Venture No. 125, 1063, American Legion. The gifts are distributed to Veterans in hospitals regardless of race, color or creed. The disabled Veteran is deserving of the appreciation of every citizen.

THIS IS A LIST OF SUGGESTED GIFTS TO PUT IN THE BOOTH:

Cigarettes	Toilet Articles	Tee Shirts- Medium and Large
Candy	Handkerchiefs	
Wallet-	Sweaters	Socks- Medium and Large
Scarf-	Slippers	
Books-	Playing Cards	Shaving Stuff

Promotional literature for J.W.V. Annual Drive.

The J.W.V. Service Officer aided veterans, Jew and non-Jew alike, to obtain their pensions, or their mustering-out pay, or pensions for their widows. In 1946 the local Post purchased a surplus Army vehicle for $25 to use as a promotional gimmick to collect gifts for service men and women, or for hospitalized veterans. For a few weeks before Christmas every year, a familiar sight on George Street was Hymie Okyn of the J.W.V. in front of this strange vehicle which travelled on both land and water (known as a duck or as a DVKH) where he solicited gift packages from the local citizens. Just before the holiday a few of the veterans would drive to Lyons Veterans Hospital, or other veterans hospitals in New York, to deliver the gifts. The J.W.V. also sponsored essay contests, presented an annual Americanism award to deserving figures in the New Brunswick area and trophies to ROTC members on the Rutgers campus. On Christmas day they took the place of Christians at jobs such as ushering at local theaters.

A Women's Auxiliary was formed in 1936 to augment the work of the J.W.V. and its first president was Hannah Reisfield.

In South River another Post of the J.W.V. was formed in 1945 and named the Sgt. Sheldon Sheinfine Post #311, after one of its veterans who died in service. Commanders serving this Post have been Daniel Golden, Harry Rosenthal and Dr. Max Golden.

Entering the final year of our coverage for this history, 1948, when the State of Israel was no sooner proclaimed than it was invaded by the armies of its five Arab neighbors, we find the Jews of the Raritan Valley beginning a concerted effort to come to Israel's aid, sending manpower, supplies and money in unprecedented amounts. This is the year we find the emergence of the Jewish Federation of New Brunswick, Highland Park and Vicinity as a separate entity, with Samuel D. Hoffman elected to preside at this crucial time. Dorothy Herf was appointed temporary secretary. The Federation was charged with running the annual fundraising campaign for the United Jewish Appeal and the coordinated campaign for many other local, national and international campaigns approved by the organization to receive allocations. The Federation would also have the specific task of coordinating certain community activities and undertaking new ones to meet the area's unmet needs. Future historians will record its growth and successes; here we can only record its birth.



Early leaders in the Jewish Federation of Raritan Valley included (seated) Dorothy Herf, David Darwin, Bernard Freedman, Samuel Hoffman, Harry Feller, Alex Katchen, Gabriel Kirzenbaum, and (standing) Mildred Freedman, Jack Ratner, Harold Bruskin, Ethel Sapiro, Isidore Sapiro, Esther Asnes, Manny Sapiro, Isidore Zamost, Louis Kalkstein, Samuel Adler, Lillian Lacher, Ben Freiman, Morris Gottfried, Sadie Bernstein, Joseph Berman, Harry Solowey, Samuel Hoddeson, Samuel Schneier, Joseph Weinberg, Josephine Winfield, Josef Perlberg (Executive Director of "Y"), and Rabbi Nathaniel M. Keller.

YOUTH GROUPS VIE FOR ATTENTION

"With a child in the house, all corners are full"... Yiddish proverb

There has been a diversity of Jewish youth activities in the Raritan Valley over the years. All of the congregations and many of the organizations developed affiliated youth groups. Not every Jewish child, however, chose to become involved. Some children restricted their extracurricular activities to scouting, athletics and school clubs; others sought a happy medium between secular and Jewish-oriented activities.

The earliest reference to youth activities was found in the files of the Workman's Circle, where it was recorded that Branch 208 was actually begun as a progressive Youth Group in 1908. The initiators of the Branch were called together to organize these activities by Frank Meiner, already a member of Branch I in New York. Other local founders included Harry Solowey, Morris Horowitz, Julius Newmark, M. Freiman, and Meyer B. Kahn.[1]

Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple records mentioned a Young Folks League planning a Dutch supper in 1914 and a Junior League formed in 1928 which would take over the supervision of the Sunday School Library. By 1934 Jean Straus and Edward Silverstein represented the Temple at Regional youth affairs, and Sarah Helen Cohn was elected Regional Vice President. Eleanor Kahn (Smith) spoke for the Temple at a local Youth Rally in 1935. Donald Goodkind and Seymour Friedberg debated at an East Orange regional meeting in 1938, taking the affirmative side of the topic "Anti-Semitism is increasing in the U.S." Lenore Kummer was the coordinator of the debate. In 1940 Eva Cohen (Silverman), in the first of a series of talks on vocational guidance, spoke of opportunities in the social services. In 1942 this youth group officially joined the National Federation of Temple Youth.[2]

Sometime around 1920 there developed six Greek letter groups among the Jewish High School youth, which remained popular until the forties. These six groups included fraternities Upsilon Lamda Phi (which alone showed evidence of activity well into the sixties), Mu Sigma, and Omega Beta Phi; and sororities Phi Delta, Beta Phi Sigma, and Gamma Tau.

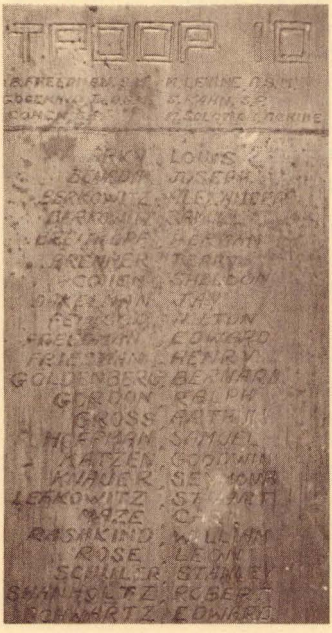
According to some of the early members, these fraternities and sororities developed because the Jewish youth felt excluded by other popular high school clubs which were supported by the churches. The primary purpose of these Greek letter clubs was social, but there were meritorious attempts to perform community services as well. For instance, the ULPs were active in

charitable endeavors, providing workers for cancer drives. The Phi Deltas made up baskets of food to take to poor Jewish families during the Passover and Chanukah holidays. The Beta Phi Sigmas assisted the local National Council of Jewish Women. All of these groups had their dances, keeping the Woodrow Wilson and Roger Smith Hotels and the Ross Fenton Farms in Deal hopping. The boys played cards during their meetings, and the girls held bridge parties at Klein's Hotel. The ULPs were very proud of the fact that the High School Advocate (yearbook) Business Manager was usually one of their members. In looking back, some of the former members realized that the closed, exclusionary system used by all six of these groups brought about an inordinate amount of bruised feelings and disappointed many people who were not invited to join. In addition, the pledge system with its sometime harsh and cruel hazing, was in retrospect not a high point in this history. Nevertheless, it was the tenor of the times, and an inveterate part of the fraternity-sorority system.

The earliest Jewish-sponsored Boy Scout troop was organized at the YMHA in 1919. Troop 16, with scout leaders Zimmerman and Dave Rubinoff, was mentioned in the 1925 "Y" records. It is not known how long this troop continued. Sporadically in the "Y" publications, the formation of other troops was announced. [3]

Boy scout troops were also organized by the congregations, and although they were limited to Jewish members, they followed typical scouting programs.

The Highland Park Conservative Temple sponsored Troop 10, organized in 1930 by Lester Mantell. Jack Lowen was the first Scoutmaster, and although it only continued until 1933, it was a winner in many competitions.[4]



Plaque carved by Terry Brenner, April 4, 1937, showing membership in Boy Scout Troop 10 of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, with Dr. Bernard Friedman scout master.

In 1934 A Boy Scout troop was meeting at Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple where "they were urged not to damage the Temple during their meetings."[5] In 1937, as a gesture of gratitude, the Troop presented a plaque to its scoutmaster, Dr. Bernard Friedman, hand carved in wood by Terrill Brenner with the scouts' names inscribed. In 1942 the Sisterhood minutes mentioned the 10th Annual Father-Son dinner given the Boy Scouts. There were many problems connected with the sponsorship of a scout troop, however, such as Shabbat activities and camping expeditions on Religious School days, and eventually the sponsorship of the troop was dropped.[6]

The only Jewish-sponsored Girl Scout troop mentioned in area records was Troop 3 at the "Y" in 1923. Listed as patrol leaders were Eva Schwartz (Sklarew), Ethel Spitz, Beatrice Wisemen, and Sadie Schick.[7]

Zionist Youth groups will be detailed in the Chapter on general Zionist activity, but a brief mention of them here is necessary to complete the scope of youth activities in the area. Young Judaean groups for boys and girls existed since 1928, sponsored by Hadassah and the Zionist Organization of America. An unknown researcher making a population survey in 1943 came to a personal conclusion that the Zionist youth groups "were weak in point of view of numbers as well as in consistency in program", and found the competition of the scout movement very difficult to overcome.[8] Young Judaea was said to have had 18 members during 1943. Other Jewish youth groups listed in the survey included Masada with 24 members, Ahavas Achim with 7, Anshe Emeth with 39, Highland Park Conservative Temple with 11, Jewish Community Center with 105, High School fraternities with 48, sororities with 87. From the same survey the researcher found that there were 61 girl scouts, 68 boy scouts, 53 members of the YMCA, and 7 members of the YWCA from local Jewish families.

The Masada group, referred to above, was another group of young men and women in their twenties who met in the YMHA. According to Ann Goldstein, this was also a Zionist oriented group.

Records of the Ohav Emeth congregation in the early thirties mention the organization of a Junior League, with William Freund as president. The rise of this youth group was considered by the congregational leaders as a ray of hope for the future, beset as they were with enormous financial burdens.[9]

At Ahavas Achim several attempts were made to develop youth groups in the forties.[10] And by the late forties, the United Synagogue Youth group was developed at the Highland Park Conservative Temple, under the guidance of Dr. Samuel C. Cooper.[11]

A variety of youth activities took place at the YMHA since its establishment in 1911. Social, cultural, and sports groups of all sorts had their day. Initially there was only unstructured recreation, with a supply of games, books, and the ubiquitous pool table available in the large rented room in the United Cigar Store building. In 1914-15, the YMHA had developed a Junior basketball team, captained by Isidore Ringel, which had become City champions. Others on that team included Harry Greenberg, Alexander Reisfield, Samuel Hoffman, Emanuel Breitkopf, and the coach Samuel Hoddeson. By 1920 when the YMHA was located on Kirkpatrick Street,



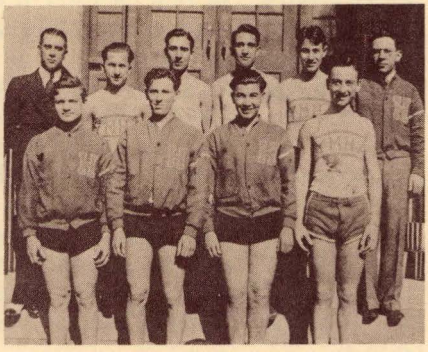
YMHA Juniors - City Champs 1914-15.

activities were so numerous that the first executive secretary, A.A. Finkelstein, had to be hired to direct them. In that same year the local baseball team captured the championship of both New York and New Jersey "Y"s. There was another successful baseball season predicted in 1923 with Sam Cohn pitching and Irving Schwartzman, the captain.

Dr. Nathaniel L. Frankel recalled playing basketball with Sam Cohen in the early years of the "Y". Basketball teams continued to be popular with the young men of the area throughout the thirties. In 1933 the team was known as The Colts, and consisted of Andrew Klepner, Arnold Belsky, Walter Ruffer, Sam Schwartz, Sam Mayrowetz, Sid Baker, Sam Stern, Harold Kaplan and Louis Dinuzo. In 1935 the team was known as The Hakoahs, and consisted of Joe Krafchik, Sol Burck, Haim Schwartz, Sid Rubin, Irving Belsky, Matty Freedman, Morris Landis, Abe Saltz, and Herman Greif, with Nat Okyn coach and Morris Garber assistant coach.



YMHA Colts - 1933



YMHA Hakoahs - 1935

Within a few years limited space at the "Y" restricted the number of activities available to the young people, and permission was obtained to use the Lord Stirling gymnasium for athletic events.

In addition to sports, other activities were developing for the young people at the "Y". The overnight camp program which was shared with many other YMHA groups started in 1920, using Camp Nah-Jee-Wah for girls and Cedar Lake Camp for boys. Numerous area children spent parts of their summers in these camps, located in the Catskill mountains. Day camps began to develop in the thirties, one known as Camp Hilltop. By 1932 a listing of twenty two clubs was registered, under the program directorship of Henry Busch. Selma Spielberger was engaged as the Habima Guild supervisor and many plays and musicals, using local talent, took place in the "Y" auditorium. This auditorium, incidentally, was uniquely lit by a large *Mogen David* (Jewish star) of blue and white electric lights on the ceiling. On some occasions Morris Sauber directed the "Y" shows, and in 1932 Charles Schneir directed a Yiddish play there. Another activity sponsored by the "Y" was the Louis Marshall Debating Team, organized in 1939. In 1945 a Youth Council was developed with all youth groups in the area planning joint cultural and social programs.

Will Baltin, who often served as historian of many local organizations, summed up the participation of youth at the "Y" in an article written in 1946. "Youth had been the spur to the formation of the "Y" 35 years ago, and it remained for a new group of youths to wrest the Center from its doldrums during the depression-swept years of the early 1930s. By 1936 the Center, thanks to youth, was again on its feet, abandoning the Kirkpatrick Street quarters for the more modern surroundings of the United Hebrew School building.....The Center is thriving and again outgrowing its prevailing surroundings.....Club work has been and still is the primary aim of the Center. Through it, youth finds an outlet for his talents and these talents being put to good use, develop along paths that lead to good citizenship and good Americanism." [12]

By 1941 the Jewish Community Center in South Brunswick also had a varied program of youth activities. [13]

There also arose on the Rutgers campus an interest in organizing strictly Jewish groups. The first mention of an organization of this type was found in Dr. Selman Waksman's autobiography, when he described his attempt in his Junior year at Rutgers (about 1913) to organize a chapter of the Menorah Society, devoted to the study of Jewish culture and Jewish problems. He wrote that although the student body was about 15% Jewish, he received little assistance from President Dr. William H. Demarest, until he convinced him that the membership would remain open, and that Dr. John Raven, professor of Hebrew at the Theological Seminary had agreed to serve as the group's advisor. [14] Records indicate that this group was still active in 1927, with 25 members. By this time Rutgers had 250 Jewish students, or 22% of the student body; and New Jersey College for Women (later Douglass College) had 167 Jewish students, or 10% of the student body. [15]

In the early 1920s, the Evergreen Club was started at Rutgers for the

Jewish students. Philip Bruskin and Jesse Strauss agreed to serve as sponsors. Bruskin's daughter Ruth Feder recalled that her father helped some of the students facing financial problems to find part time jobs. She also remembered her home being headquarters for the student's visiting girl friends.

There were several Jewish fraternities popular on campus throughout the years, as well, including the Phi Epsilon Pi, the Omega Alpha Tau; the Sigma Alpha Mu, the Tau Delta Phi, and the Sigma Delta. Many local alumni of these fraternities continued to serve as advisors after their graduation.

Local Jewish organizations made every effort to serve the Jewish college students in a variety of ways. In 1927 the Sisterhood of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple held a dance for the students, and attracted over 200 of them. In 1928 the same Sisterhood, in conjunction with the National Council of Jewish Women, arranged a dance at the Elks Club for more than 300 Jewish students. Bessie Jelin, who headed this event, reported, "It is very important for Jewish boys and girls who are newcomers to New Brunswick to meet each other. We have had some sad experiences of girls at N.J.C. who were not brought in contact with the Jewish life of the community. Also many unhappy alliances can be prevented if associations of Jewish boys and girls are encouraged."[16] The Council of Jewish Women awarded a partial scholarship that year to an N.J.C. student, chosen "for scholarship and earnestness of purpose".[17] In 1936 the College Student's League was very active, sponsored by Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple. Rabbi Nathaniel Keller led a study group on Hebrew literature at N.J.C.[18] Several other congregations and organizations, the Highland Park Temple in particular, provided social and religious celebrations for the students as well.

By 1940 Rabbi Keller was appointed head of the Hillel Council at Rutgers. In 1943 the Hillel Foundation was officially organized on the campus to provide Jewish students the opportunity to live a Jewish life on campus, to continue their Jewish education, and to add Jewish cultural activities to their schedules.[19] Rabbi Julius Funk was assigned to head this Foundation. Its headquarters on the second floor of a building on Church Street were simple, its staff minimal, but with the help of local townspeople, working through B'nai Brith, a great deal of volunteer assistance was available for the cooking and serving of kosher meals for special occasions, and in other ways as well. Details on this organization will be found in the Chapter concerning the development of the social service organizations.

This reactivated B'nai Brith Lodge (established in 1942) began to sponsor groups for teenagers. The B'nai Brith Girls (B.B.G.) started in 1945. The girls called themselves the Al Jolson Chapter, and elected Gertrude Zweibel (Klaus) as their first President. This, and a subsequent boys' group, functioned intermittently in the following years.

It is of interest to note that many of those who were involved in the Jewish youth groups herein described were still involved in activity within the Jewish community as this historical account concluded in the year 1948.

Chapter IX

THE GROWTH OF ZIONIST ACTIVITY

"If you will it, it is no dream".....Theodore Herzl

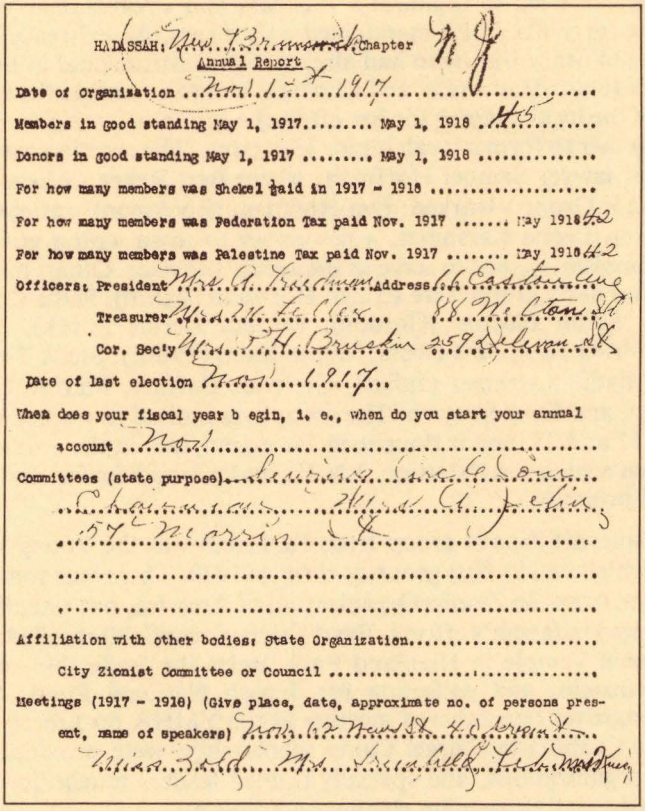
In 1896 Theodore Herzl published a program for Zionism in his book *Judenstaat* - The Jewish State. The following year he called the first Zionist Congress to meet in Basle, Switzerland to discuss the implementation of his program. Not until 1916, however, did the first evidence of Zionist thought and action manifest itself in the Raritan Valley area.

Four years before, Henrietta Szold had travelled to Palestine and seen the deplorable health conditions among both the Jewish and Arab inhabitants. She returned home determined to convince her study group to undertake the development of an organization dedicated to bringing modern health services to Palestine. It was from this small group of twelve women that Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, began. Miss Szold herself visited nearby areas to convince other Jewish women to join in this endeavor. In 1916 she wrote to Sophie Wolfe of New Brunswick, a woman already engaged in many community activities, and asked her to invite a group to her home to learn about the goals of Hadassah. Miss Szold not only spoke to this group of the great need for health care in Palestine, but of a concomitant need to study together in order to promote an interest in Americanism, Judaism, and Zionism.

The New Brunswick Hadassah Chapter was officially organized on November 1, 1917 (which interestingly enough is the day before the Balfour Declaration was announced in England stating that "His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.")[1] By the end of the first year there were forty five active members. Mrs. Abraham Friedman of Easton Avenue had served as President, Mary Feller as Treasurer, and Rose Bruskin as Corresponding Secretary. It was also recorded that Bessie Jelin served as sewing circle leader, and was credited with two shipments of clothing the first year. At the November 1917 meeting, held at 62 New Street with forty women present, Miss Szold was the guest speaker. At the February meeting the following year, Sara Kusey of Newark, who was one of the original twelve members of Miss Szold's study group, spoke.

Other first year accomplishments included the distribution of a Jewish National Fund Blue Box to every member, with the collection at the end of the year amounting to $42. The 'Restoration Fund' received $75, and the 'medical unit' received linens and the sum of $15.

With such an auspicious beginning, it seems unlikely that the organization



HADASSAH: Mrs. T. Brunswick Chapter

Annual Report

Date of Organization ..... Nov. 1 - 1917 .....

Members in good standing May 1, 1917..... May 1, 1918 ..... 45 .....

Donors in good standing May 1, 1917 ..... May 1, 1918 .....

For how many members was Shekel paid in 1917 - 1918 .....

For how many members was Federation Tax paid Nov. 1917 ..... May 1918 42

For how many members was Palestine Tax paid Nov. 1917 ..... May 1918 42

Officers: President Mrs. A. Trachtman Address 66 Eastern Ave

Treasurer Mrs. M. Fe Clerk ... 88 Mc Clane St

Cor. Secy Mrs. F. H. Brunstein 259 Delaware St

Date of last election Nov. 1917...

When does your fiscal year b egin, i. e., when do you start your annual account ... Nov. .....

Committees (state purpose) ... Education ... Social ...

... Entertainment ... Membership ... Cultural ...

... 57 Morris St .....

.....

.....

Affiliation with other bodies: State Organization.....

City Zionist Committee or Council .....

Meetings (1917 - 1918) (Give place, date, approximate no. of persons present, name of speakers) Nov. 17 Home of Mrs. H. D. Brown ...

Miss Szold ... Mrs. Sara Kussy ... Mrs. Brunswick

Early form indicating Hadassah activity in the area as early as November 1, 1917. National leaders Henrietta Szold and Sara Kussey are shown as early speakers.

disbanded, but no further records exist locally, or in the National archives, until April 1927 when a form was completed indicating that there were sixteen members in 1926, and thirty in 1927. The form included the names of Mrs. Levinstone as head of the Infant Welfare Fund (she is thought to have been from South River), and Mrs. D.H. Maisel who headed the Cultural committee. Hadassah membership had grown by the next year to seventy.

Presidents during the years that followed included Sarah Levine (1926), Elizabeth Schwartz, Mona Heifitz, Ann Pecker (1935), Bessie Jelin (1935-37), Reeve Rosenthal (1937-39), Dorothy Sosin (1939-40), Sylvia Weinstein (1940-42), Helen Friedman (1942-43), Amelia Levine (1943-44), Esther Asnes (1944-46), Dorothy Herf (1946-48), and Ruth Yatvin (1948-). In 1948 the Chapter had grown so large that discussion began on restructuring the unit into a Chapter/Group plan. By this time the organization was supporting many-faceted national projects including the Hadassah Medical Organization, Youth Aliyah, Jewish National Fund, Vocational Schools in Palestine, as well as an educational program for its members, and a youth program known as Young Judaea. [2]

Hadassah had tried to organize a Business and Professional Women's Group in the early 30s, but it maintained only a sporadic existence. In 1935 at the urging of Mary Uhr (who had already been instrumental in Detroit in organizing a Junior Hadassah[3] and who later was to be named the honorary President of the local chapter for her efforts) a group of young women was brought together to form a local Junior Hadassah. The meeting was held in the office of lawyer Samuel Hoffman, where Bert Rener - already active with the B & P Group - worked. Eva Hoffman (Bookman) was elected the first president. Leona Karshmer, a newcomer to town with a good background in Zionism, agreed to serve as the group's advisor. Others mentioned as part of that early group were Evelyn Hoffman (Baltin), Sadie Copleman (Shayevitz), Sarah Blacher (Gordon), Miriam Kernis (Steck), Florence Greenberg (Friedman), Bess Gross, Minna Kahn (Tydor), Stella Thompson (Schwartz), Sadie Karshmer (Julius), Gertrude Geffner, Marion Cushing, Helen Rosen, and Ethel Shapiro. The group was limited to women between the ages of 17 and 25, and it flourished for many years in the area supporting a children's village in Palestine, J.N.F., and a broad Jewish and Zionist educational program.

Another spin-off Zionist group from Hadassah was the Young Judaean movement which had its first group as early as 1929. There was some financial assistance from the Zionist Organization of America, but essentially the Judaeans were Hadassah's efforts. Pearl Teich (Greenfield) recalled meeting in the Masonic Temple in Highland Park under the leadership of Sylvia Cheiten Weinstein, and collecting for Jewish National Fund. Mildred Darwin (Dengrove) remembered meeting at the YMHA on Liberty Street, with Marion Cushing in charge. Camp scholarships were provided by the sponsoring organizations, and specially trained leaders taught Jewish and Zionist history and Palestinian singing and dancing.

The Zionist Organization of America in the New Brunswick district was probably organized in the early 1920s. Its primary purpose was to support the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine through projects in Palestine such as the ZOA House, an Agricultural College, schools, and the support of the Palestine Appeal. In addition they lent support to educational projects in the United States and to the Young Judaeans. They participated in the sale of shekels, along with Hadassah and other groups, whenever a Zionist Congress convened, in order to determine the number of delegates to which each organization would be entitled. Among the known presidents of ZOA in New Brunswick have been Louis Listfield, Samuel M. Adler, Harry S. Feller, Morris Roth, and Jacob Kroll.

Somewhere around 1935 Hadassah had enough potential in the South River area for a group to break away from the New Brunswick Chapter to form its own unit. Ann Greenfield became the first president, and others instrumental in organizing the chapter were Mona Heifitz, Ida Robin and Ann Pansy. It was not easy to obtain a separate charter from the National organization, but the South River women proved they could develop a strong unit on their own, which they proceeded to do. More than thirty new women arrived for the first meeting. This Chapter also developed its own Young Judaean groups in the 1940s with Sadie Shayevitz as leader. South River residents also organized their own ZOA under the leadership of Dr.

Abraham R. Pansy and Alex Siegel. In 1935 Dr. Pansy was president.

In 1918, a listing of organizations participating in the "Patriotic Forces" which aided the community in its war effort included the following Zionist organizations, none of which apparently survived until 1948. They included the Sons and Daughters of Zion, represented on the community-wide committee by Louis Siegel, Rose Jelin, Lillian Kornbluth, Morris Spritzer, Lillian Greenberg; the Jewish Socialist Zionists, represented by Samuel Sachs, Nathan Madoff, W. Weinrabb, H. Rubin, Samuel Siebeman; and the Zionist Camp #100, Sons of Zion, represented by M. Levine, H. Orenstein, M. Goldenberg, M. Schwartzman, M. Frankel.[4] We know that the latter group was meeting weekly at the YMHA and in 1927 had thirty members.[5]

As far back as the mid-nineteenth century emissaries from Palestine were sent to America to go from Jewish home to Jewish home for *tzedakah,* a form of charity, to distribute to the destitute scholars and settlers who had come to the Holy Land to spend their lives in sacred study, pious acts, and cabbalistic meditation. These men left *pushkas,* or charity boxes, behind and they returned yearly to appeal for contributions, or to empty the boxes. Many Americans considered "these beggars as indolent, rather than indigent",[6] but others welcomed them, and looked upon their merciful gifts as *mitzvot* (good deeds). This writer can well remember, as many others surely do, a row of *pushkas* lined up on the breakfront, near the Sabbath candlesticks, waiting to receive the weekly deposit of coins; and of course the black-frocked bearded gentlemen who came occasionally to collect from the boxes.

Gradually this haphazard way of sending charitable gifts to Palestine diminished, and more organized community efforts were made. In 1918 a local historian, in listing all the campaign funds to help the war effort, included the Palestine Restoration Fund, which brought in $2,165.[7] In 1926, according to Hadassah records, a dentist by the name of Dr. D.H. Maisel was listed as chairman of the United Palestine Appeal.[8] There are no further records until 1937, when it was recorded in Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple records that Beth Levin was appointed a delegate to the Jewish Community Center for the United Palestine Drive.[9] Harry Feller headed the United Palestine Appeal for some years in the 30's, and later was one of the organizers of an Ad Hoc committee for the United Jewish Appeal.[10] As early as 1941 Abe Dobin began a long tenure as chairman of United Jewish Appeal in South Brunswick. That first year with gifts between $5 and $25, the farmer's group raised $400, a sum to be multiplied many times since.[11] The first United Jewish Appeal was begun in South River in 1947, co-chaired by Dr. Abraham Pansy and Harry Dobrowsky.[12]

Contrary to the notion that the Jews in the Reform movement were not vitally interested in Palestinian affairs and Zionism, there are several references in Anshe Emeth's Sisterhood records of attention to these matters. In 1938 President Miriam Wallach expressed concern for the Jewish refugees, and asked members to write to their Senators for special action on the refugees' behalf. The members also wrote to the State Theater requesting that a feature film on this subject prepared by the March of Time be shown by the local theater. Members were also urged to sign affidavits for refugees

to help get them admitted to the United States. This was obviously in response to a letter received from the Prague Jewish Community pleading for such affidavits from the New Brunswick congregation which had sought its help when they organized in 1859. In 1939 the Sisterhood made a substantial contribution to Youth Aliyah to aid children fleeing from the Nazis to emigrate to Palestine. In 1942 the Sisterhood sent an official memo to Congress asking it to influence the British Government to withhold the White Paper prohibiting Jews from entering Palestine. Needless to say, most of the Jewish organizations and synagogues acted similarly to the same situations, but the Reform movement often suffered from the false reputation of being anti-Zionistic - which it was only in its earliest day - and so it seemed necessary to point out this evidence of changed attitudes.[13]

Aliyah, or a return to Zion, is considered by many Jews throughout the world to be the ultimate expression of Zionism - either for spiritual, cultural, or political reasons. The earliest known instance of aliyah from our area to Palestine was Rachel Ratner Luskin, who as a widow, left her grown daughters in New Brunswick and went to Palestine in 1925 at the age of 65 to live out her remaining years on holy soil in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem tending to the sick and the poor. This to her was the highest form of *mitzvah.*

Another form of *mitzvah* demonstrating a desire to help rebuild Palestine for Jewish settlement was exemplified by people undertaking large-scale land redemption. Louis Rockoff was one of these deeply committed Zionists, who as early as 1925 had initiated steps to purchase *3,000 dunam* in Palestine with a group of 42 families. It took two years to obtain the deed, another two years before the orange groves could be planted, and much more cash from the sponsors year after year. Despite constant harassment by the neighboring Arab population, the groves eventually began to produce.

As we pause in our history in the year 1948, many events are about to occur which will alter the lives of the Jewish people not only in the Raritan Valley, but throughout the world. First and foremost, of course, was the birth of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, with the Arab invasion a few days later. To better serve world Jewish needs, as well as our own community, all of the Jewish organizations decided to create an umbrella organization to be known as the Jewish Federation of Raritan Valley. That same year the first Federation-United Jewish Appeal drive was held, headed by Bernard Freedman and Samuel Hamelsky. Ceil Buchine and Eva Silverman ran the separate women's division.[14] Whether or not the Jews considered themselves Zionists, most of them came to the aid of their endangered bretheren in Israel, helping to provide support and financial assistance.

Even before the declaration of the State of Israel, some of our more concerned citizens quietly sent money or supplies to the security forces defending Palestine, to assist the immigration of those destitute Jews from the displaced persons' camps who had somehow managed to survive the concentration camps. The money purchased ships (or more likely battered boats) and crews to run the British blockade, attempting to deliver the immigrants to the shores of Palestine. Once the State of Israel was created by the vote in the United Nations, however, all this activity came out in the open.

All Zionist organizations burgeoned with new and inspired membership, and many new ones were spawned. The revelations of the holocaust following the close of World War II and the pathetic cries of the survivors who found little welcome throughout the world, as well as the agony of watching Israel try to ward off the onslaught of the Arab armies, strengthened Jewish communities everywhere, and motivated them to assist the remnants of European Jewry and to help secure the State of Israel among the family of nations.



Identified as part of the local delegation to the Washington convention of the National Council of Jewish Women in 1926 were Sophie Wolfe, Lucy Weisman, and Mary Feller who appear behind the woman who is 4th from the left in the front row. **(See page 68)**

IN THE SERVICE OF OUR COUNTRY

"Even on the threshold of war, we (Jews) are bidden to begin in no other way than with peace, for it is written: 'When you draw near a city to fight, first offer it peace.' " ...Midrash: Leviticus Rabbah, 9

The right of the Jew to serve his country and to take up arms on its behalf was established in 1656 by two young Jews in Niew Amsterdam. Both Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimson resolutely refused to pay the tax imposed on all Jews, in lieu of serving in the militia. They pressed for their full burgher's rights, such as they had enjoyed in Amsterdam, including the right to stand guard. After several refusals and appeals and an invitation "to depart (the colony) whenever and whither it please them", they finally received recognition as burghers, with all the privileges of citizenship the designation implied. [1]

With only a scant number of Jewish citizens in the Raritan Valley area until the mid-nineteenth century, there were few opportunities to test this right. The earliest mention of local Jewish personnel in the armed forces was pinpointed by Rabbi Nathaniel Keller, when he matched the name of Alexander Weinberg, a sergeant in the New Jersey Battalion fighting in one of the skirmishes on the Mexican border in the 1840s, to a Weinberg mentioned in one of the local newspapers of the day. By the Civil War, when there were at least forty Jews living in New Brunswick, Rabbi Keller found evidence of five of this number enlisting.[2] One may have been J. Hirsh of the New Jersey 4th Battalion who, in the *Jewish Record* of New York, was listed as wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. The only evidence available to this author is that Solomon Hersh Friedel, who arrived in New Brunswick in 1851, walked to Princeton with Constable Lucas of Highland Park to enlist in the Confederate Army - much to the chagrin of this family! He was not alone, however, because of the thousands (estimated between 6,500 - 10,000) of Jews who fought in the Civil War - a huge number for their proportion of the population - there were soldiers casting their lots on both sides.[3] Jewish periodicals of the day ran weekly lists of casualties, both dead and wounded, for anxious families to scan.

During this period, local historians reported that Samuel Lederer, a leading Jewish citizen of the town - "one of the grand old gentlemen" - was a tanner by trade and a supplier of harnesses to the government during the Civil War.[4]

At the Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple's Elmwood Cemetery there can be found a loose marker indicating that one of its members was a veteran of the Spanish-American War from 1898-1902. Bearing out the validity of this assumption, the 1943 local Population Survey listed one of the members of the Jewish community to be a Veteran of the Spanish-American War.[5] According to Rabbi Keller's research, there were several Jews on the city-wide committee to welcome the boys home from this war.[6] Again, at the turn of the century, we know that Louis Greenwald served for several years in the United States Marines, fighting in Nicaragua, and travelling to Cuba, Egypt, Turkey, and Palestine in the course of his duty.

By World War I it is possible to trace a full picture of Jewish participation, both in active service and in community-related service. Of the lengthy list of soldiers in John P. Wall's records, thirty four can be positively identified as Jewish, although there were others, as indicated by a plaque erected at the YMHA listing over fifty more. Several on Wall's list were commissioned officers: Captain Mortimer Harold Linden (who returned to New Brunswick to practice medicine after his war service), 2nd Lt. Ralph Solomon, and Lt. Jacob Jay Pollins. Celia Jacobs was listed as a Red Cross Nurse, but while she may have enlisted in New Brunswick, informants believed she was a resident of Perth Amboy. Lt. Pollins, who entered the service from High School, tragically died in battle. It is assumed that the Jewish contingent met with no other major physical injuries for historian Wall wrote that "of the hundreds who went to war from New Brunswick, not one lost an arm or a leg". The Jewish contingent included Edward Amon, Emanuel Breitkopf, Samuel Cohen, Monaheny Cohen, Jacob M. Freedman, Morris J. Goldenberg, Harry Greenberg, Louis R. Goldberg, Herman Goldfarb, Louis Hendler, Abraham Hortz, Max Hirsh, Henry Katz, Samuel Lifschitz, Samuel Levin, Herman I. Levine, Irving Laurie, Harry Marcus, Jacob M. Preger, Harry Schwartz, Sabetay Saltiel, Charles Schiff, Robert Stein, Meyer Shapiro, Michael Shapiro, Joseph Shapiro, Harry M. Strauss, Harry Tatarsky, Abraham Tamaroff, Morris Uchin, and Jacob Weill.[7]

A plaque "Dedicated by the Young Men's Hebrew Association to those members who served for the cause of humanity - 1917-1918" listed fifty four names, only eleven of which are on the above list by Wall. This plaque names the following: Edward Amon, Irwin Bergman, Benjamin Bruskin, Louis Cohen, Harry Demberg, Al Ernyey, Alexander Friedberg, John Fuchs, Louis Goldberg, Louis Hendler, Samuel Hoffman, Ben Laskowitz, Irving Laurie, Herman Levine, Frank Meiner, Charles Meyer, Philip Moss, Samuel Peine, Isidore Pozninsky, Milton Preger, Jacob Ratner, Alexander Reisfield, David Rosalsky, Henry Rosalsky, Theodore Rosen, Morris Rubin, Charles Schiff, Michael Shapiro, Louis Siegel, Harry Sloane, Harry Strauss, Jacob Weill, Joseph Zar; and an additional plaque adds Marcus Brenner, Edward N. Busch, Samuel Elfant, Morris Finkelstein, Abraham Getsof, Charles Hoddeson, Ralph Josephs, Julius Kalfen, Irving Kahn, Harry Levy, Jacob Lowenkopf, Emanuel Mendelsohn, Samuel Novins, Arnold B. Rosenthal, Abraham Tamaroff, David Tamaroff, Abraham Tatarsky, and Morris Tatarsky.

Civilian participation during World War I included registrars in each

ward to help draft the citizens. Several Jewish residents served in this capacity: namely Joseph Slifkin, 1st ward; Joseph Fertig, 3rd ward; and Morris Bauer, 4th ward.[8]

After the first contingent of boys had been trained, they returned to New Brunswick for a send off prior to going overseas. Among the committee that greeted them at the railroad station were Milton Strauss and Harry Silverstein. From there the boys were escorted to the Armory on Codwise Avenue. Wall wrote, "They marched to the tune of 'Over There' with the Johnson and Johnson whistles blasting. The ladies of the Red Cross served them a banquet, heaping plates with good things for the khaki-clad youngsters. There was not one wet eye."[9] Other members of the Jewish community on this farewell committee included Jesse Strauss, Philip Bruskin, Morris Bauer, Henry Landsberg and Harry Solomon.

The following year, when the boys returned from war, Philip Bruskin and Jesse Strauss served as members of the 'Welcome Home Committee'. At least 126 organizations from the area formed the 'Patriotic Force of New Brunswick' in 1918, which helped to support the war effort and the 34 separate campaigns for funds. Among the campaigns successfully subscribed by the Jewish community were the Jewish War Relief which brought in $23,500; the Jewish War Fund $11,004.35; and the Palestine Restoration Fund which netted $2,165. The campaigns also included five Liberty Loan campaigns which were all oversubscribed in New Brunswick, and well supported by Jewish families. To campaign for these funds, as well as to enlist support for the general war effort, there was a group of 'Four Minute Men' whose job was to go to the various theaters and make four minute speeches during the intermission on a variety of subjects. Among the Four Minute Men were lawyers Samuel Hoffman, Milton J. Preger, and Samuel Schleimer (who served as chairman).[10]

A listing of the 'Patriotic Force' as it appeared in Wall's account is interesting because it includes a number of Jewish organizations not in existence today, and it also reveals some of the names of the apparent leaders of the Jewish community in the year 1918. The list of 126 organizations included:

Hadassah - represented by Mesdames A. Levine, R. Barnett, S. Feller, H. Eber, A. Friedman.

Jewish Welfare Board - represented by Jesse Strauss, P. Bruskin, M. Feller, A. Jelin, A. Marcus.

Volunteer Relief Committee - represented by Miss Julia Jelin, Miss Rose Rubin, Miss Rebecca Schneier, Miss Lena Braverman.

Jewish Relief Committee - represented by Morris Bears, Jacob Jaffe, Harry Solowey, S.H. Levin, Mrs. S.H. Levin.

Sons and Daughters of Zion - represented by Louis Siegel, Miss Rose Jelin, Miss Lillian Kornbluth, Morris Spritzer, Miss Lillian Greenberg.

Jewish Socialist Zionist - represented by Samuel Sachs, Nathan Madoff, W. Weinrabb, H. Rubin, Samuel Siebeman.

Hebrew Ladies Aid Society - represented by Mesdames L. Feller, T. Copleman, M. Jelin, C. Speyer, R. Aaron.

Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society - represented by Mesdames H. Rineberg, Samuel Levine, H. Ornstein, B. Marks, N. Sontag.

Zionist Camp #100, Sons of Zion - represented by M. Levine, H. Orenstein, M. Goldenberg, M. Schwartzman, M. Frankel.

New Brunswick Hebrew School - represented by H. Eber.

Charity Organization Society - (an ecumenical group which included Mrs. Max Lederer on its representation.)

Independent Labor, S.B. Ass'n. - represented by M. Katz, M. Handel, H. Rineberg, H. Levin, M. Levin.

Y.W.H.A. - represented by Sadie Rodbortt, Roslyn Shapiro, Max Schwartz, Anna Levinson, Rose Kornbluth.

Ladies Auxiliary of Y.M.H.A. - represented by Mesdames Philip Bruskin, Meyer Feller, Abraham Jelin, Jesse Strauss, Joseph Feinsod.

N.B. Lodge #48 - OIOBA - represented by Rev. Samuel Ratner, Harry Orenstein, R. Barnett, J.B. Grossman, M. Greenberg.

Congregation Ahavas Achim - represented by W. Wolff.

Parent Teachers Ass'n. of Lord Stirling included Mrs. Levine.

Parent Teachers Ass'n. of Nathan Hale included Mrs. Arthur Hahn.

Parent Teachers Ass'n. of Washington School included Miss Carolyn Plechner.

Parent Teachers Ass'n. of Lincoln School included Miss Carolyn Plechner and Mrs. B. Friedman.[11]

The closing picture of World War I days in New Brunswick, as described by Wall, included these interesting excerpts from his romantic description of the victory parade on Nov. 11, 1918 welcoming the signing of the armistice:

> *"The parade did not begin until the Jewish paraders made their appearance on Bayard Street, waving banners with such inscriptions as 'Allies' Victory is a Jewish Victory'. The crowd extended a glad hand to their Jewish compatriots.... With the police at the head of the procession, followed by the band, the parade turned down Bayard Street into George. As the corner of George Street was reached the Zionists in line broke into the 'Marseillaise', singing the stirring tune in the French version. Everybody cheered.... The Jewish flags with their six-pointed stars and those kindred to them, the Greek, fluttered all over the foreign quarter.... 'The Day' had come and gone....making it the most memorable in the history of New Brunswick."*[12]

Less than twenty years later, however, the seeds would be sown for the Second World War. The steady rise to power of the Nazis and other fascist governments throughout Europe made it imperative that America strengthen her defenses, despite a determined attempt to keep her hands off in a wave of isolationism that swept the country. The draft was declared and numbers in fishbowls drawn; determining who would go and when. In the early numbers drawn Jules Rosenstein, Harry Gordin, Isidore Copleman

and Harold Bruskin were the first area Jews to be selected, and hundreds, including a few women, would follow them in the next few years to enter one of the armed services of our country. The highest rank among them by the end of the war would be Lt. Col. reached by David Freedman and Edward Blumberg of New Brunswick, Lawrence Milch of Highland Park, and Baruch Seidman of South River. Highest ranking woman was Army Capt. Rosalie Sofin.

Prominent among the New Brunswick citizens who served the community war effort was Samuel Hoddeson, who had the often painful job of heading the Selective Service Board for the New Brunswick area. Also on the home front, the problem of civil defense was solved by dividing the city into four areas, each with its own central headquarters, with citizens selected as block wardens. Joseph D. Marcus was one of the four area directors and headquarters was set up in the basement of his home on Stratford Place. Every air raid alert brought the civil defense unit to this basement headquarters to direct operations.

The listing of all those men and women from the Raritan Valley who served in the armed forces in World War II is so incomplete, that it cannot be included here. We do know however that there were large numbers of wounded, missing, or prisoners of war among our area Jewish veterans, and that twenty two of our young men paid the highest price. The Roll of Honor of those who died in service included Lt. Theodore Boyt (Navy), Lt. Ross B. Brower (Army), Harold Busch (Army), Sgt. Theodore Charney (Army), PFC Henry Weill Cohn (Army), PFC Jack Cohn (Army), F/O Stanley Deitel (Air Force), T/Corp Jack Edenzon (Army), Pvt. Arthur S. Feller (Army), Pvt. Milton Finkelstein (Army, South River), PFC Edward W. Freedman (Army), 2nd Lt. Nathan Henn (Army), PFC Ralph Hodash (Army), Pvt. Sigmund Lakner (Army), Melvin Levine (Army), T/Corp Samuel Mayrowitz (Army), PFC Morris Solomon Namias (Army), Lt. Henry M. Nelson (Army), Staff Sgt. Sheldon Sheinfine (Army, South River), Cpl. Carl Schwartz (Army), Pvt. Sol Schwartz (Army), and F/C Benjamin Zack (Navy).[13]

Chapter XI

THE STELTON STORY

"If I do not acquire ideals in my youth, when will I?
Not in old age." .....Maimonides

Although not strictly a part of the Jewish scene, the story of The Modern School at the Ferrer Colony in Stelton did involve a small, but significant segment of our Jewish community, and therefore merits a chapter in our history.

The School was an experiment in modern education, whose aim was to launch "the libertarian spirit". It was founded by a group of workers imbued with a spirit of idealism, ranging over all gradations of socialism. Although known as a non-sectarian school, as we can see from the names of its first trustees - "Comrades Abbott, Kelly, and Cohen" - in actuality it attracted mostly Jewish families. It originally started in New York, as the Francisco Ferrer Association, but requiring a more open area, the New York experiment was dissolved and new headquarters were set up in an old farm house in the Stelton area of Piscataway Township. Leonard D. Abbott reported to friends that the dissolution of the school in New York and the subsequent move to Stelton without money made it seem "like a new exodus of idealists entering a new wilderness - without any Moses!" [1]

There was a settlement already on the Stelton property known as the Fellowship Farm Colony, which continued to live side by side with the School, but having no official connection. Some thirty two children and six adults arrived with their principal Alexis C. Ferm to set up the school on May 16, 1915. [2]

"Auntie" Ferm, as the children called the principal, dreamed of achieving the school's goal in bringing about the "two types we need most - dreamer artists to depict a better world, and creator artists to make a better world." As the children's teacher, she was "dreaming and planning for the great Worker's College, in which the children and their elders alike might be trained to bring about a world set free from the ugliness of injustice and the ugliness of greed!" [3]

The School was beset by many problems, particularly the friction between the divergent viewpoints of the participants. All of them represented the working class, but while most of them were socialists, some were Marxists, some were anarchists, some were atheists. All elements of the radical movement were attracted, "both the best and the worst", according to Alexis Ferm. There was a constant effort to rid the Colony of the undesirables. Many food faddists, vegetarians, and health food addicts,



In the free spirit of Isadora Duncan, a group of young students at the Ferrer Modern School dance barefooted in the fields. (1924) Dancers include Alma Siegel (Silver), Vivian Siegel (Aaron), Eleanor Siegel (Moore), Jeanette Bass, and one not identified.

arrived to influence the children. Teaching discipline was up to the individual teachers. Some encouraged vocational training only, and no academics. Attendance at classes were strictly voluntary. The children were at liberty to do what they wanted. This was the method of developing "the libertarian spirit".[4]

This "spirit" gave rise to many unchecked and untrue rumors among the townspeople that the Stelton Colony was rampant with free love and nudity. Participants assure us that this was not so. There was a high moral standard observed. True, there was occasional vandalism and petty thievery among themselves, but no more so than in any other community.

Dr. Samuel Siegel and his daughter Vivian Siegel (Aaron) vividly recalled their two year experience at the Colony. Dr. Siegel had only been in dental practice in New Brunswick for six years when his idealistic wife felt the need to educate her three daughters in this progressive atmosphere. In 1923 they purchased a cottage on the farm, put in some improvements and moved in. Dr. Siegel continued to practice dentistry in New Brunswick. Vivian described this unstructured and ungraded school as an unforgettable and enjoyable experience, although in retrospect today she would have preferred more discipline. She especially loved the freedom of the modern dancing taught in the open fields by a student of Isadora Duncan, who the *New York Times* has called "the flamboyant matriarch of the modern dance movement."[5] She also recalled enjoying the storytelling hours.

Before the students could transfer to public school, it was necessary to make up for the lack of basic education with private tutoring. Because of a sympathetic and cooperative principal, most of them went to Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn for six months in order to establish their grade, and then transferred to New Brunswick High School. Despite their unorthodox education most of them adjusted well, and received good grades. The transfers, however, bussed in to New Brunswick each day, never got over the sense of being apart, or "different" from the New Brunswick students.

The Siegel family only remained at the Colony for two years, but the creative spirit that was imbued in the children during their period at The Modern School remained a strong influence on their lives.

Chapter XII

SOME PATTERNS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

"Life is with people" ..... Old folk saying.

With the help of information gleaned from interviews and statistics revealed in the 1943 Jewish population survey, some random patterns can be detected in the lives of the area Jews.

Whereas members of the generation growing up at the turn of the century indicated that marriages took place when they were in their late teens, by 1943 statistics indicated marriages were delayed until couples reached their mid or late twenties. In 1943 almost 78% of all the Jewish widowed were found to be females; about 2/3 of them 55 years or older. Divorced and separated couples were minimal, only 1.3% of the total population of the community. Intermarriage was beginning to be a factor, and although only 17 couples attested to this, the researcher had reason to think that the true figure was much higher. The birth rate among Jewish families apparently had begun to be much lower than that of the general population, only 1.8 per family.

As far as occupations or careers pursued in 1943, 11.1% of the Jewish population in the working force was found to be engaged in the professions, compared to only 8.1% of the city as a whole. 40.3% of the Jewish families were engaged in retail or wholesale trade. Others were employed in manufacturing, more in the management field than as workers, as evidenced by the dwindling numbers of Jews listing themselves as union members. A minimal number of Jewish workers were involved with the service trades. There were two Jewish firemen and one policeman, just about the same number listed in 1908. A good number of Jews were insurance agents or realtors. In the large insurance companies, the highest ranking Jewish employees included several assistant managers. 12.3% of the area Jews were office workers in the total working force, and these were predominantly women.

Jewish children remained in school longer than children in the community at large. Statistics showed that of the age group 18-24 years, 18.1% of Jewish children were still in school, compared to 9.6% of the general population.

To see how women were beginning to enter the professional fields by 1943, the survey counted two female accountants, four dieticians, one journalist, one lawyer, four lab technicians, two librarians, one musician, four nurses, one optical technician, one optometrist, two social workers, and twenty two teachers.

A few other interesting 1943 statistics revealed that at least 323 subscriptions to Yiddish or Hebrew newspapers or periodicals were delivered in the area, indicating that a fluency in the native language still existed. Another interesting statistic was the large role played by Jews in many of the non-Jewish organizations in the area. One of the largest groups included 86 Jews who joined the Elks. Rabbi Keller had noted in his research that Jews were known to have belonged as early as 1897, and found that one of the exalted leaders of the Lodge was Jewish in the early days. Other organizations with large Jewish membership included the Masons with 125, Odd Fellows with 89, Knights of Pythians with 36, Amity Link with 65, and Rebeccahs with 88.

Finding a parttime job to augment the family coffers seemed to have been the lot of many of the young Jewish people growing up in the early part of the twentieth century. With no child labor laws to safeguard them, and with no minimum number of years in school required, some of the people interviewed indicated that they found jobs when they were only eight years old. Many who grew up before 1920 reported only several years of schooling, although some returned to evening school or the Wilson School of Business to learn a trade or complete their education. They worked in factories, shops, and the trades. They peddled, they started small businesses, and one even drove a trolley car. Life was not easy. There was the constant struggle to save enough money to guarantee their children the necessary education which would enable them to move up the economic ladder. Many women worked in their husband's shops to help increase the meager family income, leaving the care of the smaller children to the older ones.

Many families still suffered from great poverty throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and while the children were required by then to remain in school until the age of 16, numbers of the male children still sought afterschool employment. Many reported selling newspapers and magazines from house to house. The most popular sales were for Boys' Life, Ladies Home Journal, Country Gentlemen, and Saturday Evening Post. The Jewish owned shops were often sources of parttime jobs too. Shoe stores were the most popular. Many a local lad worked as a salesperson on weekends and evenings. The youngest swept the floors, delivered packages, and set up displays. Some children had newspaper routes, delivering the local, New York, or Yiddish newspapers. When one child would leave his job, he would sell his route to another. Several young boys had egg routes, which they had purchased from other entrepreneurs for $4.00. Some had seasonal jobs on nearby farms, picking strawberries for instance. Some sold Eskimo Pies from either a bicycle or a truck. Some worked in the local factories. Some who were musically inclined played in area dance bands. Some sold hot dogs at the athletic stadiums. One filled subscription bottles in a drug store. During the summer the lucky ones were able to find jobs as hotel waiters, camp counselors, seashore lifeguards, and amusement park helpers. The pay was minimal in any of these jobs, often 15¢ per hour. Later this was raised to 20 or 25¢ per hour in the 1930s. Some of those interviewed reported giving half of the earnings to the family, and keeping the other half for pocket money. The only parttime job reported by women during this period was teaching in


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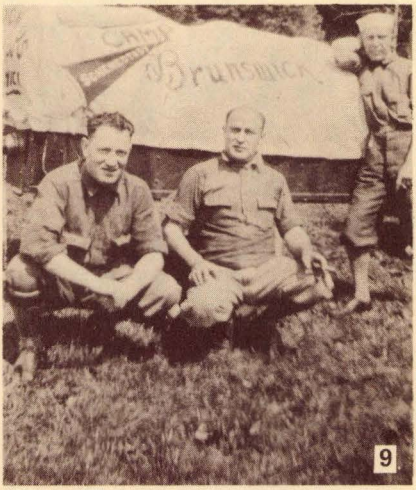

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Variation on Vacations

(1) Outing in Park, circa 1920s. (2) The Roller Skaters, mid 1920s. (3) YMHA outing, circa 1912. (4) Strolling the boardwalk, mid 1930s. (5) A trip to the country: Tannersville, N.Y., circa 1914. (6) YMHA Camp Nah-Jee-Wah, 1928. (7) The Jersey Shore, circa 1915. (8) An automobile ride, early 1920s. (9) New England Camping Trip, late 1920s. (10) Posing at the Photographer's Shop, 1912.







the Religious Schools, at the rate of $1.00 per day. (Parenthetically it might be mentioned that the girls of that period mostly remained at home to help with the housekeeping, developing the necessary skills to make them what was then considered eligible for marriage. A college education was generally not planned for the daughters in a majority of the families, since any available money was used for the education of the sons.

With the approach of World War II the above attitude regarding the education and occupations of Jewish women changed. The war created a great need for women to enter the labor market, to fill the jobs of the exiting soldiers. As the general level of income rose, and the change in attitude towards women occurred, many of them took advantage and sought higher education and jobs. It is interesting to note that prior to this time those families who had experienced their wives and daughters going to work in the family business described their efforts as "helping out" rather than "working".

For recreation, especially after the turn of the century, in addition to those activities previously mentioned, people enjoyed visiting the local Opera House or the Bijou Theater, where both vaudeville and movies were very entertaining. In addition there was often a musical show put on by the YMHA with local talent, a dramatic play staged by Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple members, a dance at the YMHA, a strawberry festival or whist game sponsored by many of the Jewish organizations, a Temple picnic at the beach, or a goulash picnic at Ohav Emeth.

A few words should be included about the different kinds of vacations enjoyed by the Jewish families, since these patterns also changed over the years. From the turn of the century to the early 1940s a number of factors limited the kinds of vacations that the Jewish families enjoyed. Financial circumstances, lack of transportation, long working hours and rare paid vacations, the lack of kosher facilities in some places, and finally the 'restricted' signs outside many of the resorts all had to be considered when families decided how they would spend their vacations.

A typical vacation for the more affluent Jewish family might have been a summer spent in the mountains of New York or Pennsylvania. Families with lesser means would restrict their summer activities to outings in the nearby parks, with a picnic basket and blanket; or to day trips to the Jersey seashore, either Asbury Park or Atlantic City, for a swim or a walk on the boardwalk. By the 1920s and 1930s we hear of families - sometimes two or three sharing the expenses - taking bungalows for a week or two at the seashore, in the mountains, or on the Delaware River. This was also the time when many families boarded in *Kuchalanes* where they brought their own linens and equipment and cooked in community kitchens, after staking out their own corner in the 'icebox' and on the stove. The more affluent families at this time would own a seashore home or rent a home for part of the summer, or would send their children to summer camps.

It was a rare family that took a winter vacation, or that traveled to faraway places during this period. A diary of one of these travelers, however, contained a fascinating story of a six week trip to Europe in 1928 by steamship. There are descriptions of visits with relatives, to old Yeshivas,

to family graves in Lithuania where "cemeteries filled with our ancestors" were seen. There are also vivid glimpses of "dirty, dusty, smelly towns, filled with beggars," of "cobblestone streets strewn with manure and of crossing a river on a hand-paddled ferry." Throughout this one family's travels were descriptions of visits to synagogue services and dining in kosher restaurants, especially on the Sabbath. Reading between the lines of this diary, it seems that this family, just as many others in the area, had performed a *mitzvah* by sending many gifts over the years to family members who had opted to remain behind.

With the affluence that came with the 1940s, there is much more evidence of rental or purchase of summer seashore homes. There was a steady movement in popularity from the beaches of Belmar, to Bradley Beach, Deal, and West End. Many people stayed in the boarding houses or small hotels of the area. The women and children would remain for a part of the summer, while the men commuted on weekends. Then wanderlust began to seep in, and families would pack up and travel to Florida, to New England, to Canada, and occasionally a few hardy souls would drive to California, where many former local persons had moved in search of a more successful life.

Life for the Jews in the Raritan Valley area, as we leave it in 1948, was a fairly comfortable one. The young people growing up, or those veterans returning from active duty were finding more opportunities opened up to them. The G.I. Bill of Rights was financing their continued education, and the so-called quota system had been knocked down by the colleges and graduate schools. New employment opportunities were opening up for Veterans as well. Jews were finding greater acceptance wherever they went, and overt anti-semitism was just about non-existent. The Raritan Valley area had been good to its Jewish citizens. By the same token, the Jews had helped to make the Raritan Valley area a good place to live. It was surely a relationship that was mutually beneficial.

POSTSCRIPT

Many changes have occurred within the Jewish community of the Raritan Valley in the last thirty years. Hopefully these will be recorded in detail at a later date. For the moment only a simple overview will be attempted.

The 1940 census, the last one prior to 1948, listed the number of Jewish people in the New Brunswick area (including Highland Park and Franklin Township) as 5,150 or 11% of the total population. By 1978 the Jewish Federation estimated that the Jewish population living within the wider scope of the Raritan Valley probably numbered 18,000. The increase came about not only through a natural growth, but from the thousands moving in from the big cities to settle in the suburban areas. Additional growth came about through a series of new immigrations including a number of holocaust survivors who continued to trickle in after 1948, a few Hungarian families who arrived in 1956, and most recently a growing group of Russian families taking up life in the Raritan Valley.

Many new congregations have developed, particularly in the suburbs. Several have changed their orientations from one Jewish approach to another; several have combined with another nearby congregation, and several have moved, or are about to move, to suburban areas more convenient to their membership. Whereas in 1948 there existed eight viable congregations in the area, in 1978 there are sixteen in existence; most showing a steady growth in size, and several in the process of enlarging their buildings. The Hillel Foundation, in addition, has its own regular services, both traditional and reform. The impact of the feminist movement has been felt within the religious groups in the past ten years, for there have been several examples of women being elected to office, one synagogue had a woman serving as cantor, several have invited women to have *aliyot* (blessings before the Torah), and women are counted as members of a *minyan* (group of ten worshippers) in the Reform and in some of the Conservative congregations.

Concomitant with the growth of the congregations has been a similar growth within the religious school populations. Although there is no longer a United Hebrew School for afternoon instruction, there has been a remarkable growth in the Moriah Yeshiva Academy, the Jewish day school. Between the growth of the original religious schools and the development of new ones in the new congregations, there has not only been a rise in the enrollment, but a 1972 survey made by the Board of Jewish Education estimated that there was then an indication that 50% of all Jewish school children were receiving some degree of formal Jewish education, and that there was an increase in the numbers of students continuing their education beyond the Bar Mitzvah age.

Jewish youth groups have grown in size and in scope in the past thirty years. Sponsoring organizations and congregations have provided them with professional leadership and greater financial support.

Organizations too have proliferated. While some of the early ones no longer exist, many new ones have formed to cater to new interests and current community needs. The Jewish Federation of Raritan Valley, which was in its formative stages when this history closed in 1948, has developed into an effective instrument for coordinating and providing for needs within the Jewish community at large. Its *Jewish Journal,* established in 1956, has been an effective voice for communicating the Jewish news of the area. Its Federation-United Jewish Appeal fundraising campaign raised a total of $1,100,000 from over 6000 contributors in 1977, topped only by the 1972 campaign during the Mideast Yom Kippur War, when fewer contributors gave $1,500,000 in gifts.

The first Israel Bond campaign was launched in 1951. Bond purchases totalling $100,000 were made that first year - a total which grew to over three million dollars in the last 1977 campaign.

In 1952 a Middlesex County Chapter of Brandeis National Women's Committee was established to support the libraries of Brandeis University. That same year saw the establishment of the first Golden Age Club in the area, co-sponsored by the YMHA and the reorganized National Council of Jewish Women. Other Senior groups followed. The provision of hot kosher lunches for senior citizens began in 1977, co-sponsored by the YMHA and the County Nutrition Project. Many other organizations sprang up, including several chapters of ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), a religious Zionist group known as Mizrachi, and a Tay Sachs Chapter to educate Jewish families about genetic diseases.

The newest facility in the area is the Central New Jersey Jewish Home for the Aged, which in 1975 opened for residents from Middlesex, Union and Somerset counties.

The last thirty years have witnessed the rise of new and vigorous leaders in the Jewish community of the Raritan Valley. Many have also made significant contributions in the secular world. All of these will some day be recorded in detail in the continuation of this history.

Thus this first chapter of the history of the Jewish people of the Raritan Valley draws to a close.

"A people's memory is history; and as a man without a memory, so a people without a history cannot grow wiser, better."

....Isaac Leib Peretz

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It is my hope that the readers will relish and treasure this history, as much as did I who researched it.

RMP

It will be the policy of the newly formed Jewish Historical Society of Raritan Valley to provide safekeeping in its archives for important documents and appropriate memorabilia (or facsimilies thereof) so that other historians might have the benefit of this information for future research. All readers are urged to inform the Society of the availability of any archival material, as well as to call attention to any omissions or corrections within this book for future clarification.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Marcus Patt is a member of a Raritan Valley family which has been involved in both the religious and the secular community of New Brunswick for several generations. Her grandfather Israel Laurie, her uncle Abraham S. Marcus, her father Joseph D. Marcus, and her mother Bessie Laurie Marcus appear often in this history, for each was a mainstay in the community.

The author, too, has served in many capacities within both the Jewish and the secular community. Her name is associated primarily with Hadassah and with the Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, but she has also had major involvements with the Federation-United Jewish Appeal and with Israel Bonds, and lesser involvement with many other Jewish organizations. She has led Parent Teacher Associations, been active in the Douglass College Associate Alumnae, and served on the Citizens Recreation Commission in the City of New Brunswick. She has been honored with the Lehman Award by the Israel Bond organization for her service to the Jewish people, and with the Alumnae Recognition Award by Douglass Associate Alumnae.

Her writing skills have been put to use by many organizations. She edited the Southern New Jersey Regional Hadassah Bulletin for 15 years, her Temple monthly bulletin for 8 years, the Residents' newspaper at the Central N.J. Jewish Home for the Aged since its inception more than 2 years ago, and she has authored many scripts for various organizations. This publication is her first professional effort.

Mrs. Patt lives in New Brunswick with her husband Milton, president of Colonial Tank Transport. They have two married sons; Richard a physician in Family Medicine, and Steven a physical chemist in the field of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance.

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